BLINKY PALERMO
ABSTRACTION OF AN ERA

Christine Mehring

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für Mami

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PREFACE

The place that an epoch assumes in the process of history can be determined better by an analysis of its inconspicuous surface manifestations than by judgments of the epoch about itself.
—Siegfried Kracauer, "Das Ornament der Masse" (1927)

Blinky Palermo's work has not received the attention in the United States that it has in Europe, although the artist spent several years toward the end of his brief life in New York City. A pivotal figure in postwar European art, Palermo both reflected and led the transition of German art from a national to an international stage and engaged such issues as the German economic miracle, the rise of the art market, and debates about art and politics. As a result, he transformed dead-ended modernist painting into historically resonant abstraction that embraced decoration, playfulness, and even commercialism, thereby opening up possibilities for later generations of artists. In this sense, following his teacher Joseph Beuys, Palermo can be seen as an artist "who died young, who left behind a fragment from which one can nevertheless glean the impulse—the impulse of the era." Palermo's abstraction reflected the era from which it originated while also moving art beyond it.

Yet Palermo's pivotal position within postwar art has never been recognized to the same degree as that of his teacher or of his close friend and sometime collaborator Gerhard Richter. A number of exhibitions have introduced his art to wide audiences across Europe, but owing to the way they were hung, these shows, with the exception of the fall 2007 exhibition at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, have inadvertently misrepresented Palermo and his work. Beginning with the 1980 retrospective of the Galerie-Verein in Munich (organized by the artist's dealers Heiner Friedrich and Franz Dahlem in collaboration with his painter friend Imi Knoebel) and culminating with the 2003 show curated by Gloria Moure at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona that then traveled to the Serpentine Gallery in London, all these displays have interspersed Palermo's four work groups—objects (Objekte), cloth pictures (Stoffbilder), wall paintings (Wandmalerei), and metal pictures (Metallbilder)—not only horizontally but also vertically, with a cloth picture, for example, hanging high above an object. The resulting hodge-podge created the impression that Palermo was an artist who died before he was able to produce a coherent body of work.

The rationale for these displays was Palermo's own hanging of his works in exhibitions held at Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem and at the Düsseldorf academy while he was still a student. Yet beginning with his February 1968 exhibition of cloth pictures at Galerie Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf, Palermo emphatically showed his work groups separately—not merely in separate rooms but in separate exhibitions. In effect, then, the posthumous exhibitions, with the exception of the 2007 Düsseldorf show, followed the model of Palermo's student shows rather than that of his later, mature ones. Few curators seem to have taken seriously the recollection of Gerhard Storck—himself a curator who worked closely with Palermo on a never-realized metal picture exhibition just before the artist's death—that Palermo would never have brought together in one place "things that obviously had nothing to do with one another or that only apparently belonged together."

This volume, conceived as a historical and critical study of Palermo's abstract art, presents a different Palermo. It begins in 1964, when the twenty-one-year-old Peter Heisterkamp entered the class of Joseph Beuys at the Düsseldorf academy, and ends in 1977, when the thirty-three-year-old artist, already widely recognized, died of suffocation, probably owing to drug use, on the Maldives island of Kurumba. In separate chapters dealing with the four groups that make up his oeuvre, followed by a consideration of his collaborations with Gerhard Richter, I locate Palermo's work within the worlds of postwar and abstract art. Following Beuys, I show that the significance of Palermo's art lies in its function as an "impulse of the era," reflecting and advancing both contemporary trends in Germany and international currents in the art world and beyond.

Palermo created more than sixty objects between 1964 and 1974. With their recurring motifs, such as the Beuysian staff, pairs of fragments, and small, hovering geometric shapes like triangles and ovals, the objects illuminate Palermo's formative years in Düsseldorf and his increasing independence from Beuys and the prevailing German art traditions associated with Beuys: Romanticism, expressionism, and "spiritual" art. Using artifice, decoration, and humor, Palermo challenged and transformed these historical legacies, returning to objects for ten years as if to measure the distance he had come from painting in a German manner.

Between 1966 and 1972 Palermo made roughly sixty cloth pictures: horizontal bands of commercial cloth that were sewn together and attached to a stretcher. This medium-specific, flat, and unified abstract "painting" moved Palermo's art away from specifically German concerns to take on the contention of the American critic Clement Greenberg that a merely stretched or tacked-up canvas could not be a "successful" picture. At the same time, by working with period colors and alluding to the fashionable landscape genre, Palermo flirted with art as a popular commodity. He thus connected modernism to the market and reflected, with a mixture of skepticism and enthusiasm, on the German economic miracle, the rising art market, and the ways in which the German art world of the 1960s reduced self-reflexive painting from the United States to a hot market item.

Between 1968 and 1973 Palermo produced around thirty wall paintings by highlighting spatial characteristics, adding decorative elements, or painting walls in monochrome colors. None have survived in their original state, but the artist's documentation allows us to revisit them. These wall paintings can be seen as projections of Palermo's skepticism toward both consumer culture and utopian conceptions of art; they were perceptually destabilizing when viewed in the context of concurrent environment art, banal in the context of German pop, and decorative in the context of New Ornamental painting. Through them Palermo used modernism's ambivalence about decoration to create historically meaningful abstraction.

After he moved to New York in late 1973 and until his death a little over three years later, Palermo produced about thirty metal pictures. For most of these, he arranged along a horizontal axis at wide regular intervals three or four rectangular aluminum sheets, each painted in a different combination of two acrylic colors with a pair of horizontal bands framing the space between them. Continuing the project of the objects, Palermo's metal pictures collapsed—which is to say preserved and overcame—national boundaries of art making. By engaging in a specifically German misreading of isolated, nationally defined characteristics of American art, Palermo's last body of work commented on and led a way out of the hermetic aesthetic discourses that had characterized the New York art world in the late sixties and early seventies.

Throughout his career Palermo maintained an intense artistic rapport with Gerhard Richter. Beginning in 1966, when they created what amounted to a dialogue between their works, the two shared an elective affinity that was first manifested in trades and dedications and culminated in a series of largely unknown collaborations in 1970 and 1971. This bond played an important role in both Palermo's and Richter's work at crucial junctures in the artists' careers. His common ground with Richter crystallized for Palermo what he most cared about: assessing the artistic and social relevance of abstract painting and expanding its possibilities. Through their shared project, Palermo and Richter created art with a distinctly European character that was separate from, even as it engaged with, contemporary American art.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

By all accounts Blinky Palermo thrived on human relationships for the creation of his work, and so did I for the creation of this book, which could not have been written without the support of Thordis Moeller. Over the years, Thordis answered a flood of phone calls and opened to me not only her archive but also, together with Peter Buchholz, her home. Far beyond her catalogue raisonné, which provided a scholarly foundation, I respect her memory, commitment, and expertise, and thank her for her trust, encouragement, and humor. Her tireless assistance, along with that of her son Friedrich, immeasurably facilitated the reproductions of Palermo's works. I am also grateful to Palermo's brother, Michael Heisterkamp, whose generosity allowed these reproductions to be as extensive as they are.

I am proud to be part of a community of Palermo scholars who bonded over an unusually generous exchange, in written form and, Palermo-style, at the Blue Blazer bar in Edinburgh: Pia Gottschaller, Susanne Küper, Thomas Lange, and Bernhart Schwenk. Bernhart's dissertation was the first important work on Palermo, and it broke ground for me. Pia's expertise and precision have raised the standards of my thinking and looking, and her extensive comments and answers to questions were most helpful. Susanne's archival research was inspiring, and the recent retrospective she co-curated at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf was the first that I believe Palermo would have approved of. My conversations over the years with David Reed, another Palermo acolyte, have inspired more confidence and creativity than he realizes.

In broader art historical circles, the model of Yve-Alain Bois's scholarship and intellectual integrity continue to inspire me far beyond the dissertation he advised; his friendship and advice continue to guide me. Both he and Benjamin Buchloh returned me to the art of the continent that I, like Palermo, left in search of American art. It is in that sense, too, that it was an honor to complete this book in Josef Albers's former office at Yale University, and my colleagues there shared their expertise, in particular Christy Anderson, Chip Benson, Ned Cooke, Sandy Isenstadt, David Joselit, Mary Miller, and Joe Scanlan. Tim Barringer, Anne Dunlop, Alex Nemerov, and Chris Wood read excerpts and offered critical comments at critical moments. I have learned more than they realize from Yale's graduate students, especially Jess Atwood-Gibson, Jay Curley, Colin Lang, Luke Smythe, and Pan Wendt, who all work on closely related material. My new colleagues at the University of Chicago, in particular Darby English, Wu Hung, Matthew Jackson, Joel Snyder, and Marty Ward, gave me the confidence to let go.

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Sean Keller and Leo Mehring-Keller have embraced Blinky as a virtual family member and have, most patiently and impatiently, respectively, shared with him my time. Sean's emotional and intellectual presence puts everything in reach; the joyous emergence of Leo's puts everything in perspective. The unfailing love of my family in Germany—my late father, my late grandparents, the late Richard Keller, Peter Kuhnert, and the Lohmänner—has remained an emotional home. Helma Mehring-Keller has been a generous mother, great friend, and reliable researcher. This book is for her.

All artworks reproduced in this book are by Palermo unless otherwise noted. Titles are followed by the illustration number in *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*, ed. Thordis Moeller (Stuttgart: Oktagon, 1995), abbreviated as *Wvz*. Measurements are given in the system in which the works were made. The irregularities of Palermo's works are sometimes difficult to capture in precise measurements. All efforts have been made to give detailed dimensions, which follow those given in the *Werkverzeichnis* unless additional information was available. Triangle dimensions read left to right, with depth given last if applicable; room dimensions are given as width by length by height (where known).

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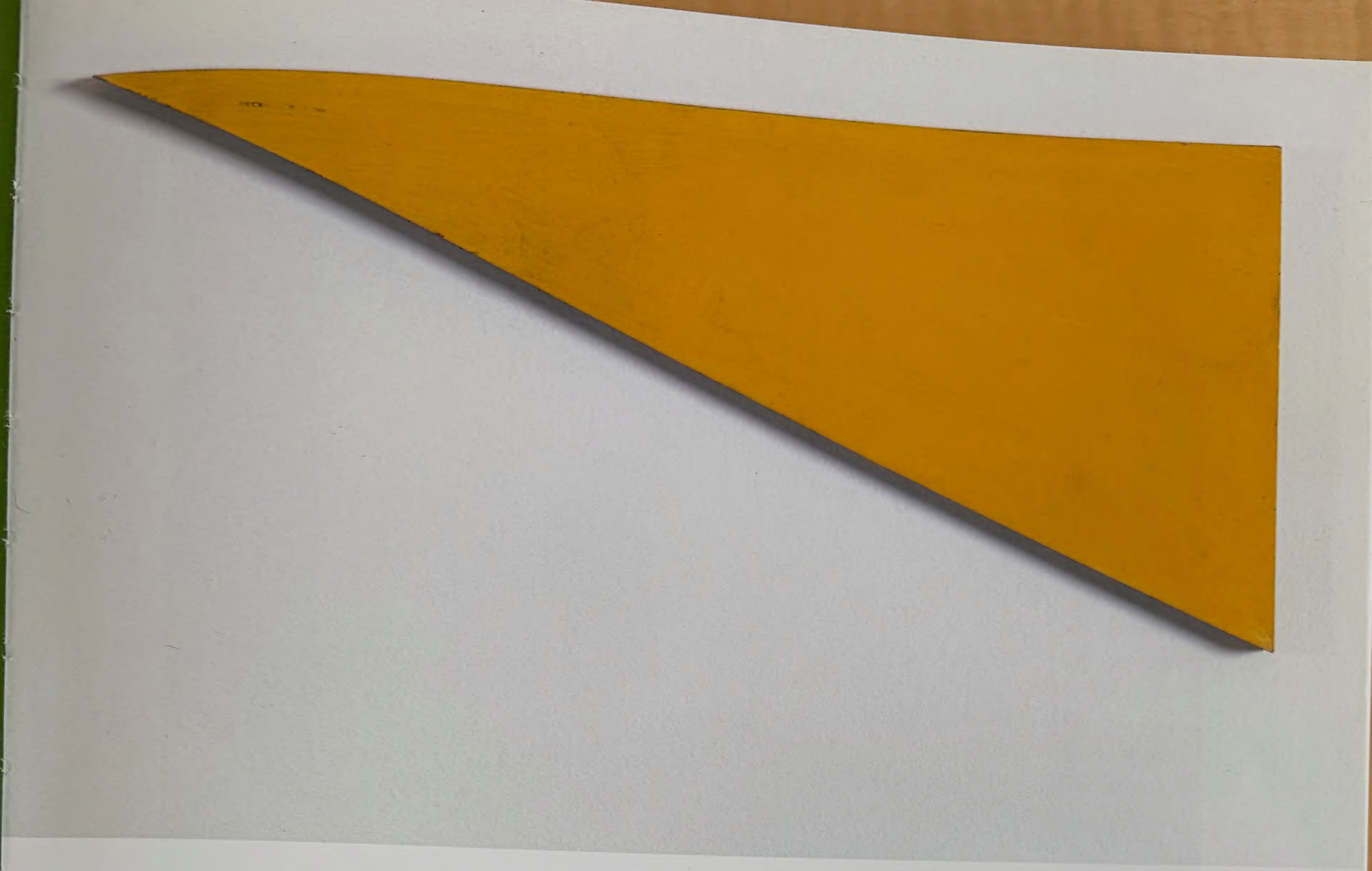


OBJECTS, 1964–1974

PAINTING AWAY THE GERMAN WAY OF PAINTING

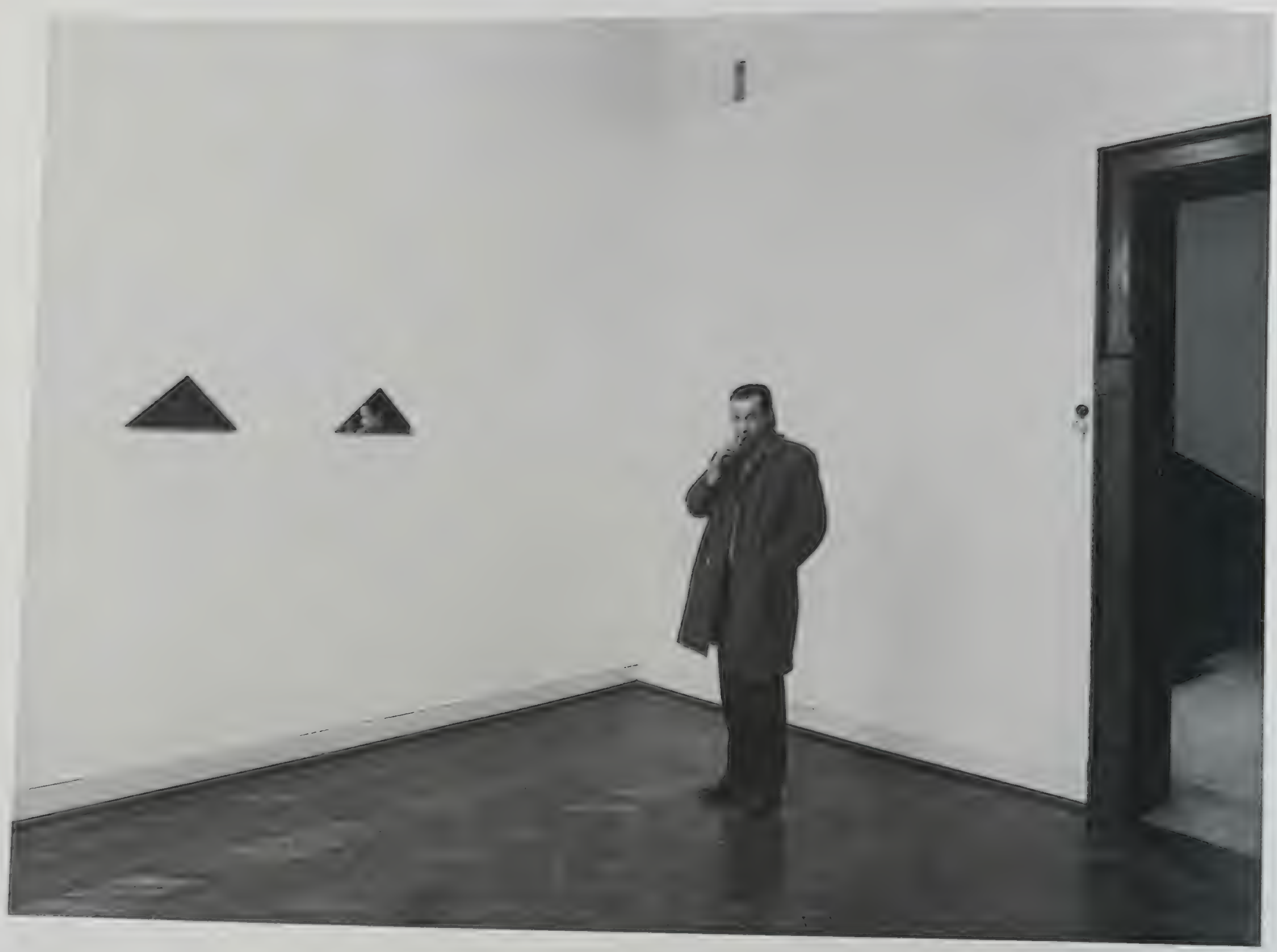


Fig. 1 Portrait of Palermo, 1973, with *Untitled* (*Wvz* 110), 1969, in the background. Photograph. © 2007 Timm Rautert, Essen.

A portrait of the artist shows Palermo's contemplative profile reflected in a triangular mirror, part of an untitled object that consisted of the mirror paired with his signature blue triangle (fig. 1). The photograph was taken in the 1973 exhibition at the Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach entitled *Palermo. Objekte*, which surveyed what the artist called his objects, and it literalizes what many have claimed—that the artist is "in" his work: it is inseparable from his biography, and his premature death at age thirty-three and his small oeuvre "unconditionally belong in the picture."[1] These objects, indeed, command a central place in Palermo's oeuvre: they are the artworks most often discussed in the literature on Palermo. Made over a period of ten years, they form the most extensive body of work. There are at least sixty, though the number varies according to the definition of *object*. Considering how many of the objects date to the artist's student years, however, it is time to reevaluate their role as a key to Palermo's art.

Although the story of "Blinky Palermo" has been told many times, our knowledge of the man remains surprisingly limited. Given what we do know, the picture we have of a young man who was preoccupied with his troubled identity seems inevitable. "Palermo," as the artist signed most of his work, was born Peter Stolle in 1943 in Leipzig, territory that would shortly thereafter become part of the German Democratic Republic. He and his twin brother, Michael, were adopted as infants by a family named Heisterkamp, who moved to the small city of Münster in West Germany when Peter was nine. His mother died when the boy was only fifteen, and his father during a critical period immediately following his move to New York City in 1973. As a young artist Peter was rechristened once more at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 1964 when he took the curious name Blinky Palermo, after the mafia manager of the boxer Sonny Liston, reportedly because he resembled a newspaper picture of the American Palermo.[2] By all accounts, Palermo was a sensitive, charming man who remained notoriously quiet in public and was especially reserved about his art. He had problems with alcohol and drugs, and he died, most likely as a result of suffocation owing to drug use, on the remote Maldives island of Kurumba. It is the résumé of a Romantic.[3]

The catalogue produced in conjunction with the first retrospective of Palermo's work three years after his death sealed the myth. The exhibition was organized by the Galerie-Verein in Munich and drew heavily on the collections of its members (fig. 2), most of whom had close ties with Palermo's lifelong dealers, Heiner Friedrich and Franz Dahlem. Along with Palermo's artist friend Imi Knoebel, Friedrich and Dahlem shaped the content and format of the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, which one critic dismissed as "voodoo" arrangements; it offers an eclectic array at best.[4] Illustrations of Palermo's works, with an emphasis on the objects, are juxtaposed with memorabilia from the artist's life—the teenager surrounded by siblings, the eighteen-year-old's affectionate letter to his future wife, the artist blindfolded by his friend and fellow student

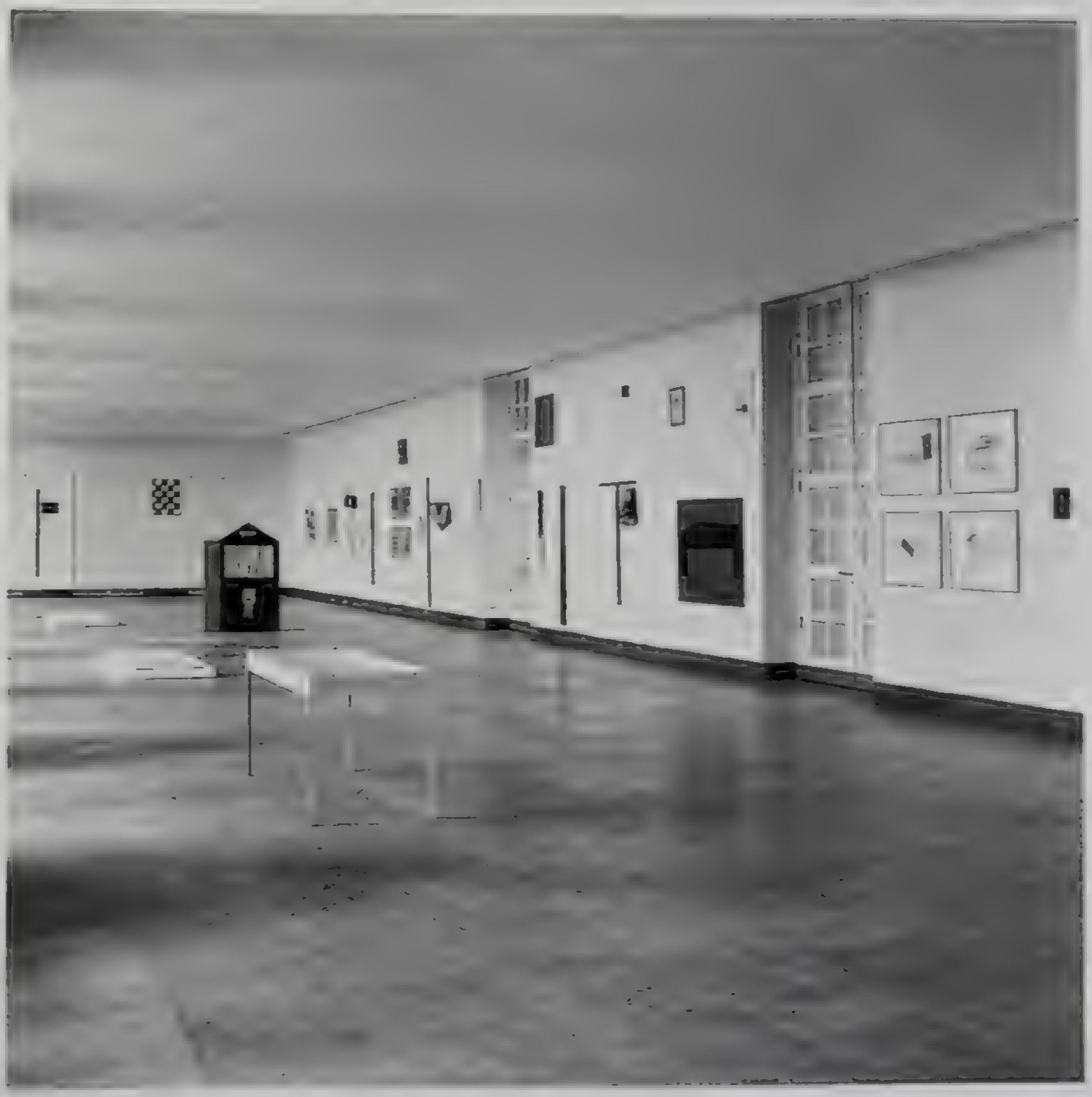


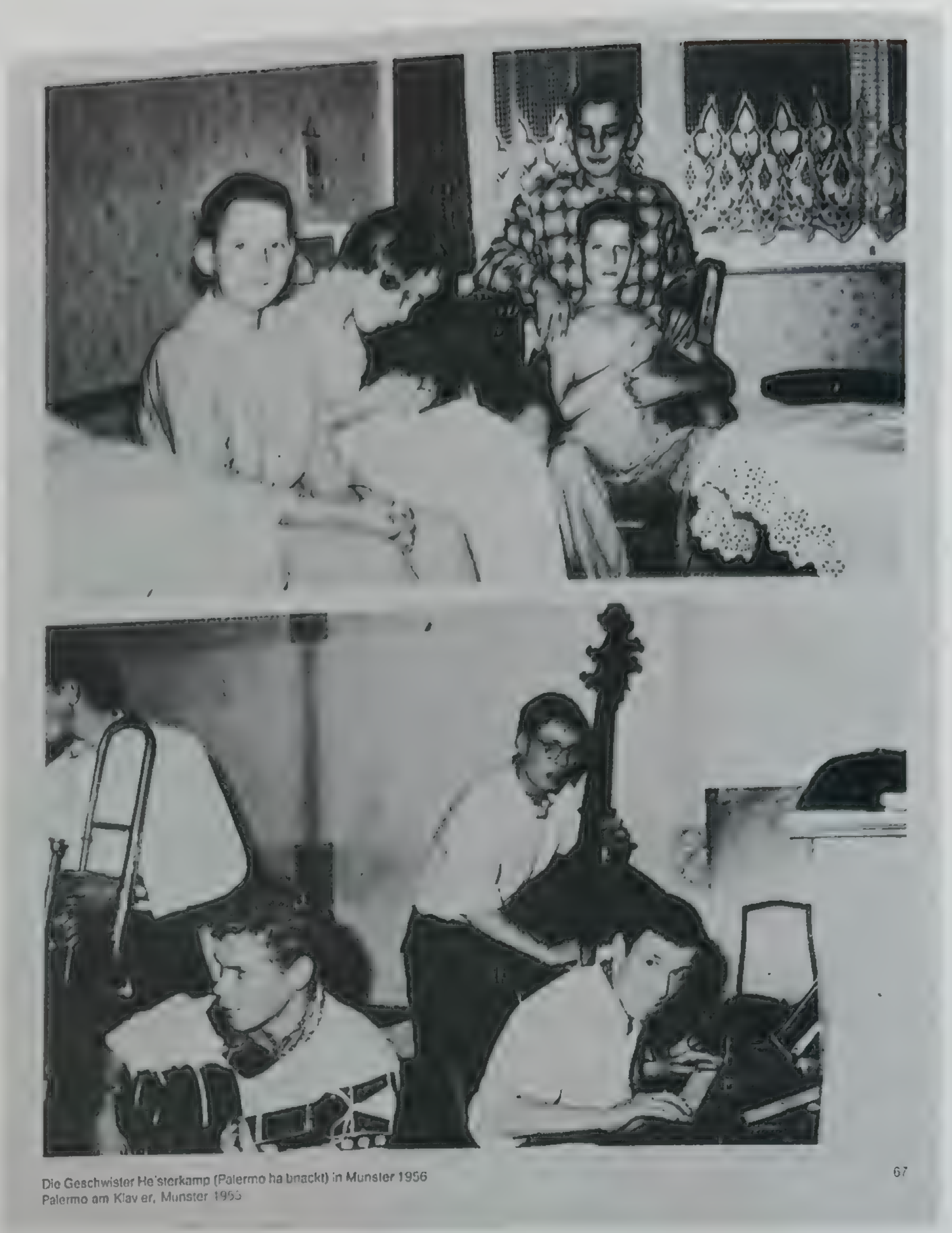
Fig. 2 *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976* exhibition, Galerie-Verein München in the Haus der Kunst, Munich, 30 July–21 September 1980

Anatol Herzfeld, the artist with his teacher, the artist with his dealers (fig. 3).[5]

The cultic aura of this first catalogue encapsulates the reception of Palermo's life and work in the years immediately following his death. In 1991, in the first scholarly account of Palermo's art, Bernhart Schwenk worked out the mythic motifs underlying the literature—the stereotypical, imprecise, often incorrect notes on the artist's life and the stress on its mysterious and spectacular aspects.[6] One significant trope that recurs throughout is the artist's evasion of language: Palermo was withdrawn and silent, we learn; and indeed only a few statements by him were published. As if respecting that silence, many have expressed the difficulty, even impossibility, of translating their experience of his works into words.[7]

Such myths pose well-known historiographic problems, for they influence memories. We rarely find an account by a friend, such as the remembrances of Gerhard Richter, that does not fit the mold.[8] What is more, the simplistic Palermo myth has, with a few exceptions, prevented a critical examination of his art or has tainted approaches to it, offering existentialist, Romantic, or spiritual claims unsupported by visual or material evidence.[9] Beuys, for example, related the shift in Palermo's style upon entering his class—from two to three dimensions and from paintings to objects—to the student's name change and his many reported personal crises: "He realized that Heisterkamp might do for the old paintings, but this kind of painting would have to involve a completely different name! He was talking to some other students about Palermo—and I think Anatol first spoke about it—and he was simply christened: Now your name is Blinky Palermo! . . . He wanted to become an entirely different person. It had a lot to do with the real, essential decision to radically discard his own personality, his own life history, in order to do a new thing in terms of art. He was always involved in crises, and this was one of those crises as well."[10]

To take the visual diversity of Palermo's oeuvre and of his objects in particular as evidence of a



Die Geschwister Heisterkamp (Palermo halbnackt) in Munster 1956
Palermo am Klavier, Munster 1955

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Fig. 3 *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, exhibition catalogue, Galerie-Verein, München, p. 48

vaguely defined existentialist meaning is to ignore what really links his apparently different work groups: the pursuit of contextually produced meaning through abstract forms and materials, and a concern for opening up the possibilities of abstract painting beyond prewar and contemporary practices. The existentialist dimensions of Palermo's objects become most tied to visual specifics when conceptualized, as they frequently are, in terms of spirituality, Romanticism, or expressionism and related to the art of Beuys. But Palermo's objects engage with these legacies only to test and question them, to reformulate or leave them behind. His abstract objects are historically meaningful because they cleanse abstraction, as it were, from the clichéd, ahistorical prewar concepts that were so eagerly revived by German artists and cultural representatives during the immediate postwar years. It is in this sense of clearing the ground for new forms and concepts of abstraction that Palermo's objects constitute the foundation of his oeuvre, the rightful beginning of Palermo's art.

Granted, Palermo's earliest work bears evidence of a young artist's existential search. Thordis Moeller's *Werkverzeichnis* (catalogue raisonné) identifies the beginning of Palermo's oeuvre in works created between 1959 and 1960 that exhibit a sense of spontaneity and traces of the artist's hand: crude scratches in oil impasto, flowing lines of black ink, speckles from a dried-out brush, diluted watercolors, and smudgy monotype impressions (fig. 4).[11] This is the language of existentialist painting that shaped the face of German art during the immediate postwar years: the relinquished control, intimate scale, and subdued, earthy palette that became known as Informel. But Palermo's version is that of a language being learned and betrays the authenticity that western Europe celebrated in its art during the 1950s. His filling of sheets to their edges and corners feels like simply the accomplishment of a task. The diversity of media and styles does not represent alternative approaches to a shared concern as it does in his mature work but rather a student's experiments

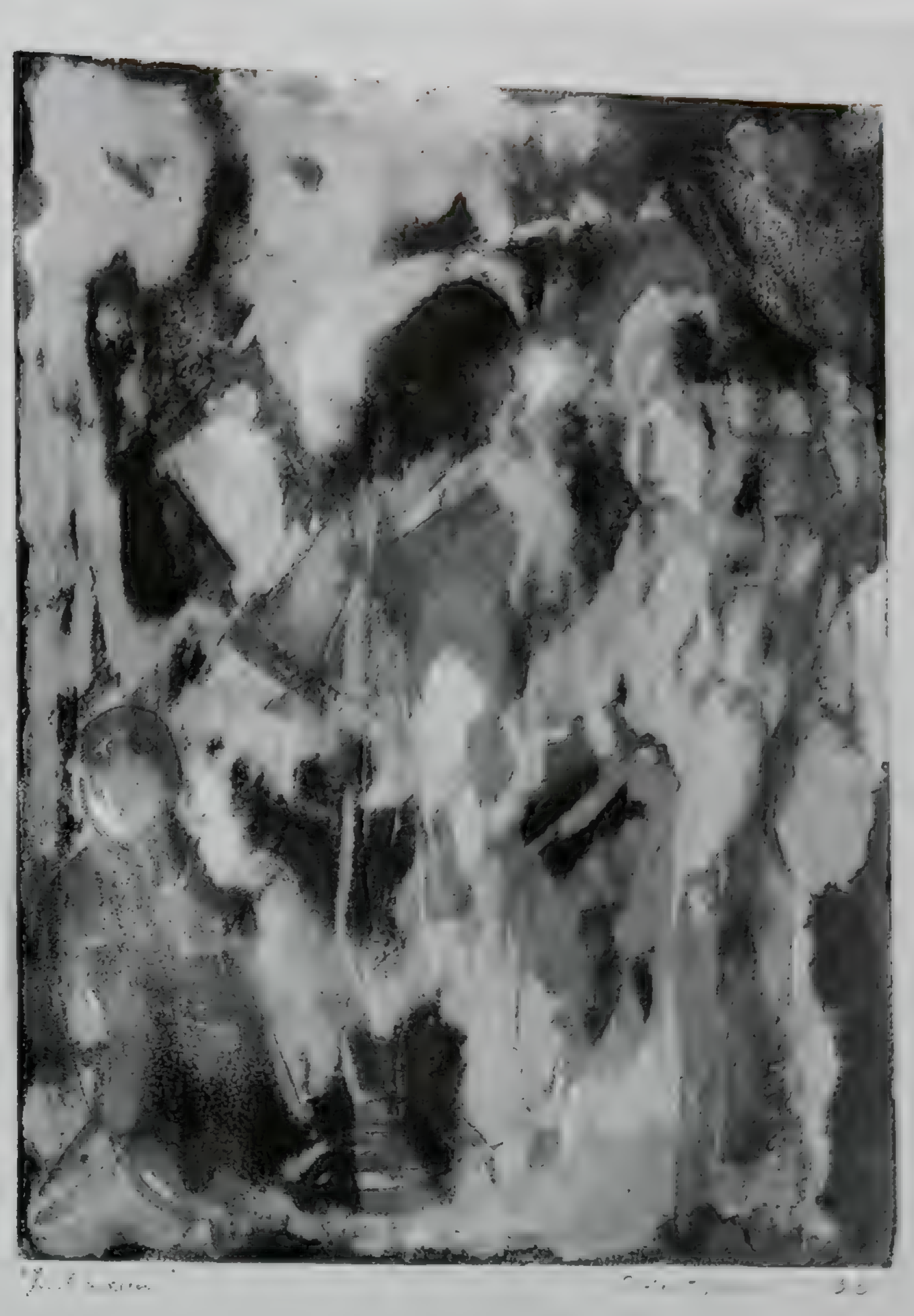


Fig. 4 *Indianerin* (Native American) (*Wvz* 214), 1960. Watercolor over monotype on paper glued on cardboard, 18.5 x 14 cm. Deutsche Bank AG.

with technical possibilities and available styles, a young man's learning of the art of his time. It must be remembered that Palermo was only seventeen years old when he was supposedly "beginning" his artistic work.

The young student's eclecticism continued even after he made a drastic stylistic shift in 1962. During part of his Informel period and after 1961, Palermo was enrolled in graphic design and sculpture classes at the Werkkunstschule Münster, a design and crafts school, and he occasionally worked on local window displays for retail stores. Yet after his transfer to the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in May 1962, Palermo's drawings and paintings show another influence (fig. 5).[12] The sudden turn to centrally placed objects with mysterious identities and organic forms, ornamental lines, frames within frames, and plain backgrounds came from the surrealist paintings of Palermo's new teacher Bruno Goller (fig. 6). Goller's influence had been crucial in moving earlier students, such as the machine painter Konrad Klapheck, and many other young German artists away from existentialist painting in the early sixties. Now Goller helped Palermo overcome his youthful fascination with the fashions of Informel.[13]

Palermo's surrealist phase did not last long. Following five semesters under Goller, Palermo transferred into Beuys's class for the winter semester of 1964. That was in part a matter of necessity, for Goller had retired that summer. The move was probably also due to curiosity about—even serious interest in—Beuys and his class, although neither teacher nor students had yet gained the notoriety that would be associated with them in the late sixties and early seventies. Under Beuys, the young Palermo's tendency toward emulation gradually developed into a complex and critical engagement with the art around him, including that of his new teacher. In the end, then, we can assign no proper origin to Palermo's art. Until two years before his death, Palermo made objects to test how close he had come to a true beginning.

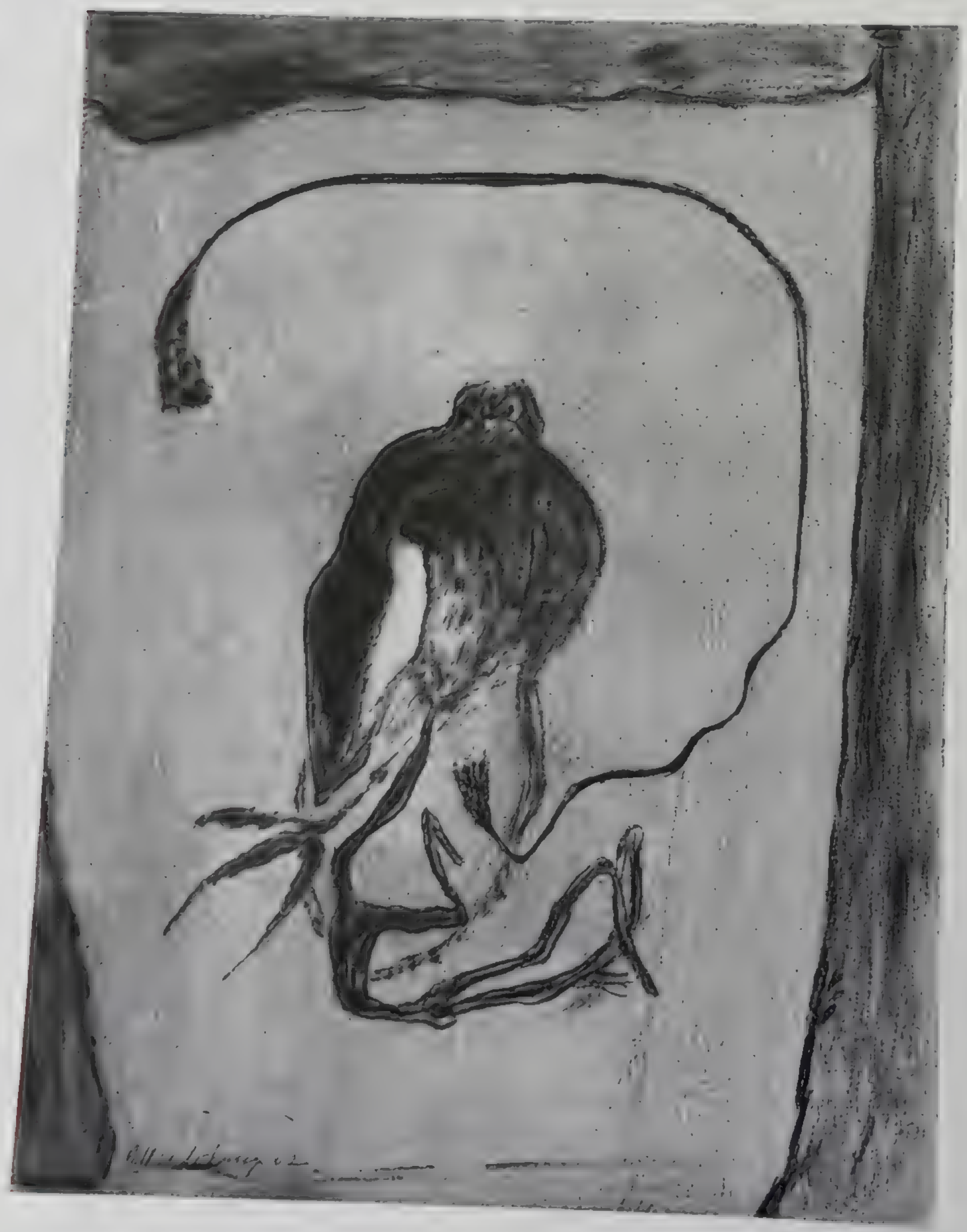


Fig. 5 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 7), 1962. Oil on canvas glued on hardwood fiberboard, 67.3 x 51.3 cm. Dia Art Foundation, New York.

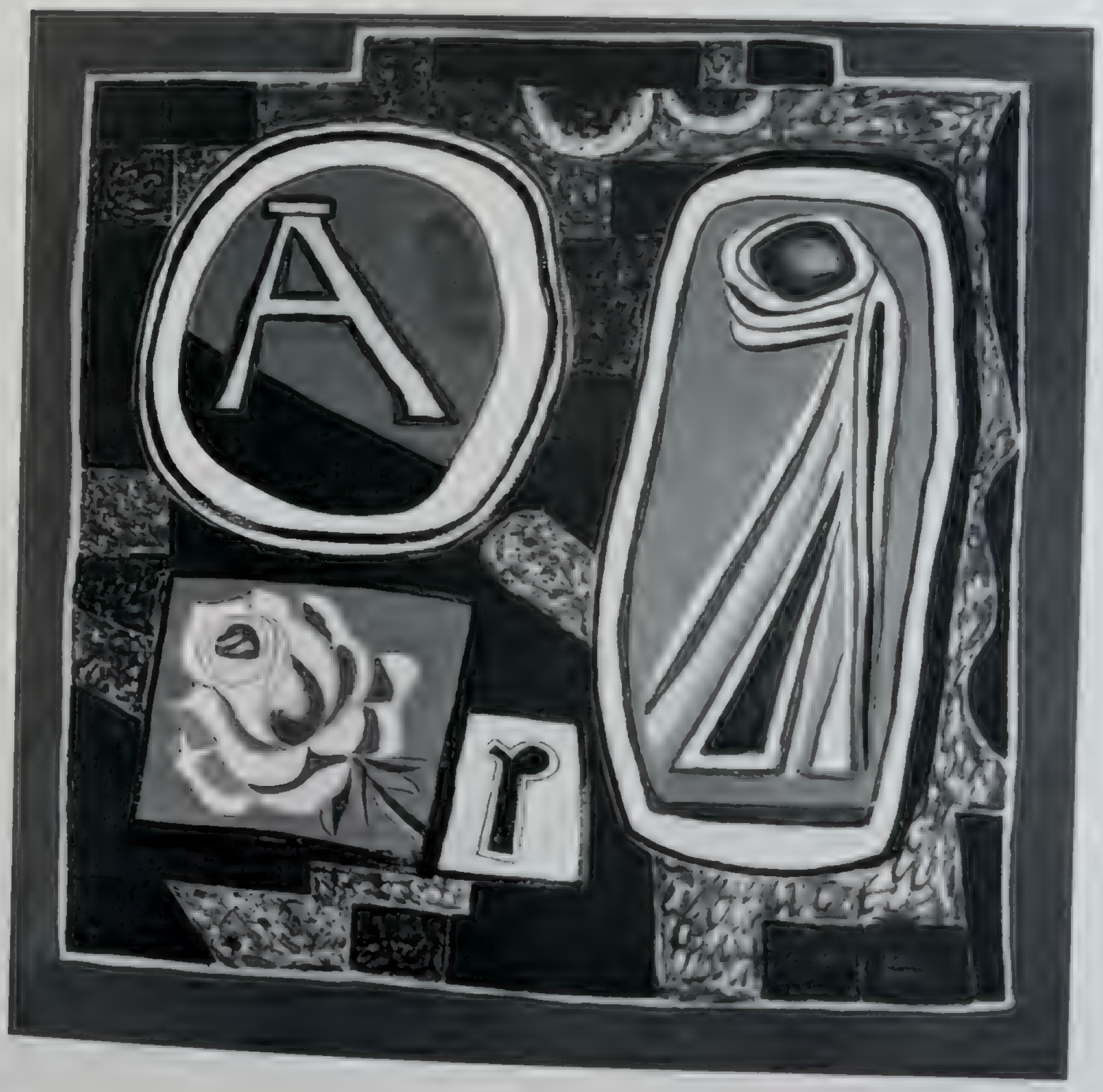


Fig. 6 Bruno Goller, *Stillleben mit Rose* (Still Life with Rose), 1954. Oil on canvas, 90 x 90 cm. museum kunst palast, Düsseldorf. © 2007 Bruno Goller-Archiv.

STUDENT YEARS WITH BEUYS

Palermo's transfer from the Werkkunstschule in his hometown to the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf a hundred miles south was probably motivated by the city's emerging status as a German center for contemporary art. With the former cultural and political capital of Berlin divided and located in isolation in the East German Democratic Republic, postwar German culture had become decentralized. Starting in the late 1950s Düsseldorf, the capital of North-Rhine Westphalia, gradually became a magnet for art dealers and artists alike.

Düsseldorf's proximity to Paris and the significant number of collectors residing in the industrial Ruhr area made it an attractive location for dealers. It was here in 1957 that leading Informel dealer Jean-Pierre Wilhelm opened his Galerie 22 and Alfred Schmela opened his equally influential Galerie Schmela with an exhibition of Yves Klein. Düsseldorf also became the residence of choice for many young artists seeking to establish themselves after the war.

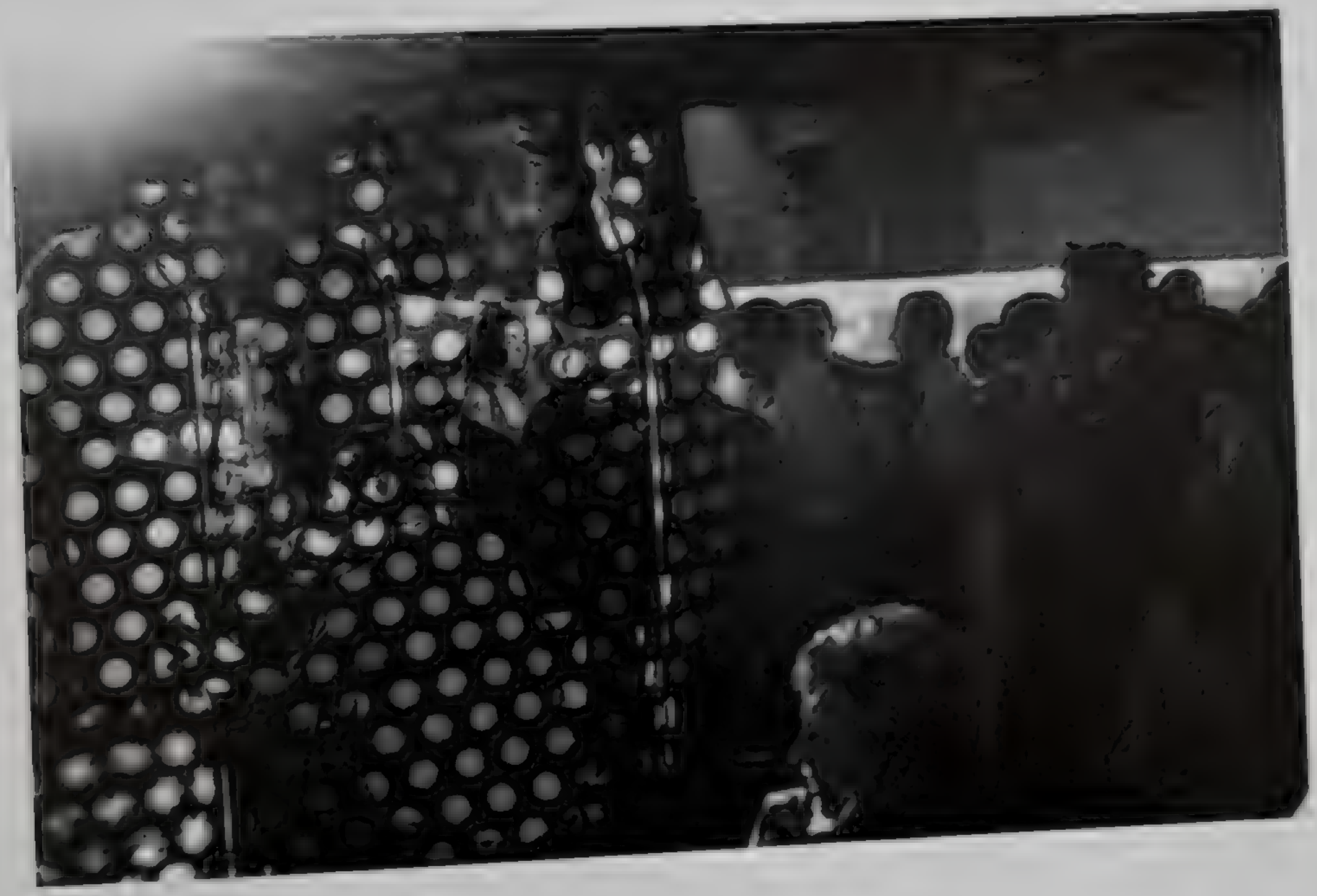


Fig. 7 Konrad Lueg, Ferdinand Kriwet, and others, happening at Creamcheese Bar, Düsseldorf, 1967. Photograph. © 2007 Manfred Leve, Nuremberg.

Gruppe 53, founded in 1953 by a group of painters with a shared interest in Informel, was based in Düsseldorf. It was there, again, that the new Zero movement arose, celebrated as the first internationally acclaimed avant-garde in Germany since the Stunde Null (Zero Hour, named for a popular expression referring to a new beginning following the end of World War II). Following their studies in Düsseldorf, the Zero artists Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, and Günther Uecker mounted exhibitions in their apartments and studios and were soon picked up by Schmela to stage what became some of the most publicized exhibitions of contemporary art in Germany, including the *Zero Demonstration* outside of Schmela's gallery in 1961 and the *Zero Fest* in the Rhine meadows made for television in 1962. This trend increased over the course of the decade. Legendary artists' establishments furnished with sculptures and installations—such as the Creamcheese bar, where Palermo occasionally worked as a waiter, and the EAT ART restaurant run by the Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri—became popular gathering and performance places for members of the art world (fig. 7). Soon international exhibitions were devoted to Düsseldorf artists, including the 1969 *Düsseldorfer Szene* in Lucerne and the 1970 *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* in Edinburgh.

Düsseldorf's art institutions furthered the city's art image. The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen opened in the summer of 1960, and the Kunsthalle and the Kunstverein, along with the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in nearby Krefeld, staged important contemporary art exhibitions.[14] In fact, the city stayed ahead of its nearby rival Cologne well into the 1960s chiefly because of its outstanding art school. Although important new galleries opened in Düsseldorf throughout the sixties, most notably Galerie Konrad Fischer in 1967, Cologne had taken the lead as the center of the contemporary art market by mid-decade. Yet it never turned into a city of artists the way Düsseldorf had done, above all because it lacked an equivalent to Düsseldorf's lively Kunstakademie, which trained generations of leading postwar artists.

Originally a private drawing school led by the painter Lambert Krahe, named Kurfürstliche Akademie in 1773, the Düsseldorf art academy proudly looked back on a long history. It had flowered during the Romantic era under the directorship of Friedrich von Schadow and experienced another boom during the 1920s when eminent teachers such as Paul Klee and Ewald Mataré joined the faculty. After teaching was suspended during the last years of World War II, the academy reopened in January 1946 and quickly took the lead in German culture, thanks in part to the return of Mataré and his strict curriculum but also because of other diverse, cutting-edge faculty. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the academy's teachers included the surrealist painter Goller, the Informel painter K. O. Götz (teacher of Gerhard Richter), the sculptor Gerhard Hoehme (the first teacher of Sigmar Polke), and the stage designer Teo Otto (the first teacher of Jörg Immendorff).[15]

And then there was Joseph Beuys. Named professor of sculpture in November 1961, he single-handedly defined the public identity of the academy during the 1960s and into the 1970s. Beuys's fame as an educator reached its peak in late 1968, when he radically opened up admission to his class, for which he was eventually dismissed in 1972 in a controversial decision by Johannes Rau, minister of education for North-Rhine Westphalia. Beuys also received significant public attention for two exhibitions of his students' work, *Klasse Beuys* in the Städtisches Museum Trier in 1969 and *mit, neben, gegen* (With, Beside, Against) in the Kunstverein Frankfurt in 1976. Although their sponsoring institutions supervised these exhibitions, participating students selected and installed their own works. What had been envisioned as a collaborative process turned instead into long debates that threatened to lead nowhere in Frankfurt and uncoordinated displays of egotism in Trier. The chaos surrounding the exhibitions, their haphazard appearance, and their early closings gave a distorted picture of Beuys's impact as a teacher as well as of the work of his students.[16]

Beuys's true significance as a teacher is, in fact, easy to underestimate. He is certainly well known for the spectacular activist pursuits that defined him as an educator in the public eye during the 1970s and 1980s: his provocative installations and exhibitions, his dismissal from the academy, and his concept for the Free International University.[17] But the list of Beuys's students suggests that his pedagogical influence was most important within the confines of a small classroom during the early to mid-sixties. Aside from Palermo, members of Beuys's class during this period included Imi Giese, Jörg Immendorff, Imi Knoebel, Ulrike Rosenbach, Reiner Ruthenbeck, Katharina Sieverding, and Norbert Tadeusz. Others were loosely associated with the class; Sigmar Polke worked as Beuys's teaching assistant for a while and Anselm Kiefer, a student at Karlsruhe academy, frequently visited for critiques from Beuys (fig. 8).[18]

Palermo spent three years in Beuys's class, first as a regular student until the winter semester of 1966, and thereafter through the winter semester of 1967 as a Meisterschüler (master student), an honor conferred upon a professor's most outstanding graduating student, which extends affiliation with the academy for another year and sometimes comes with privileged access to the teacher or a studio.[19] We can imagine what it was like in Beuys's class during these years. Most important, while the class had attracted a significant number of diverse, talented students, it was still small enough to allow the teacher to interact intensively with each individual.[20] Above all, Beuys believed in the students' self-determination, stating that "each student does only what corresponds to [his or her] individual peculiarity."[21] Palermo confirms this in one of his few surviving written statements, his response to a questionnaire published in conjunction with the *mit, neben, gegen* exhibition in Frankfurt. Palermo asserted there that he "would speak for Beuys. As a personality, as a teacher. As a teacher, he showed me the way to myself and to my possibilities."[22] In order to foster individual development, Beuys often asked students to set tasks for themselves.[23] He also encouraged them to develop their own ways of thinking about

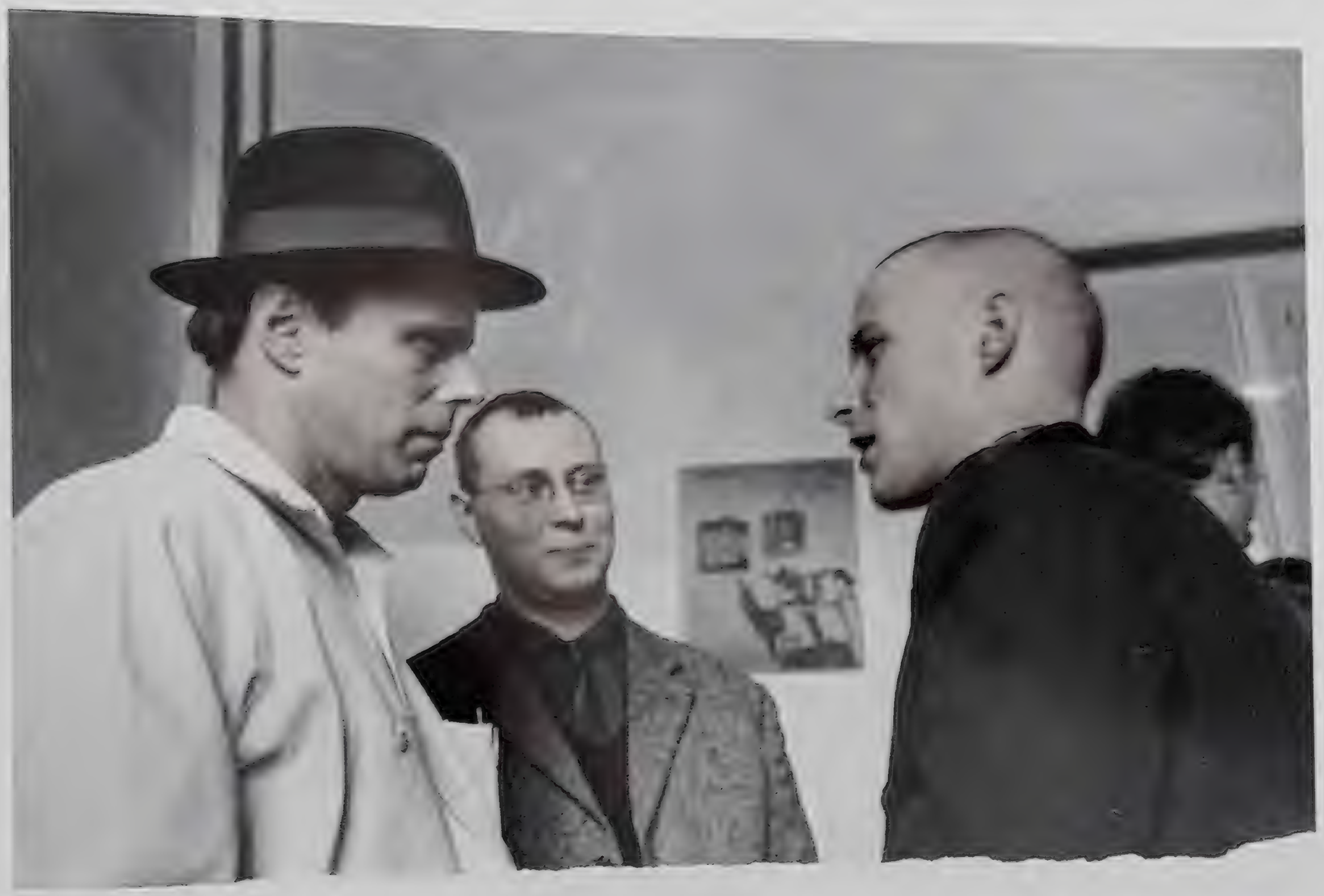


Fig. 8 Joseph Beuys, Sigmar Polke, and Palermo at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, 1965. Photograph. © 2007 Ute Klophaus, Wuppertal.

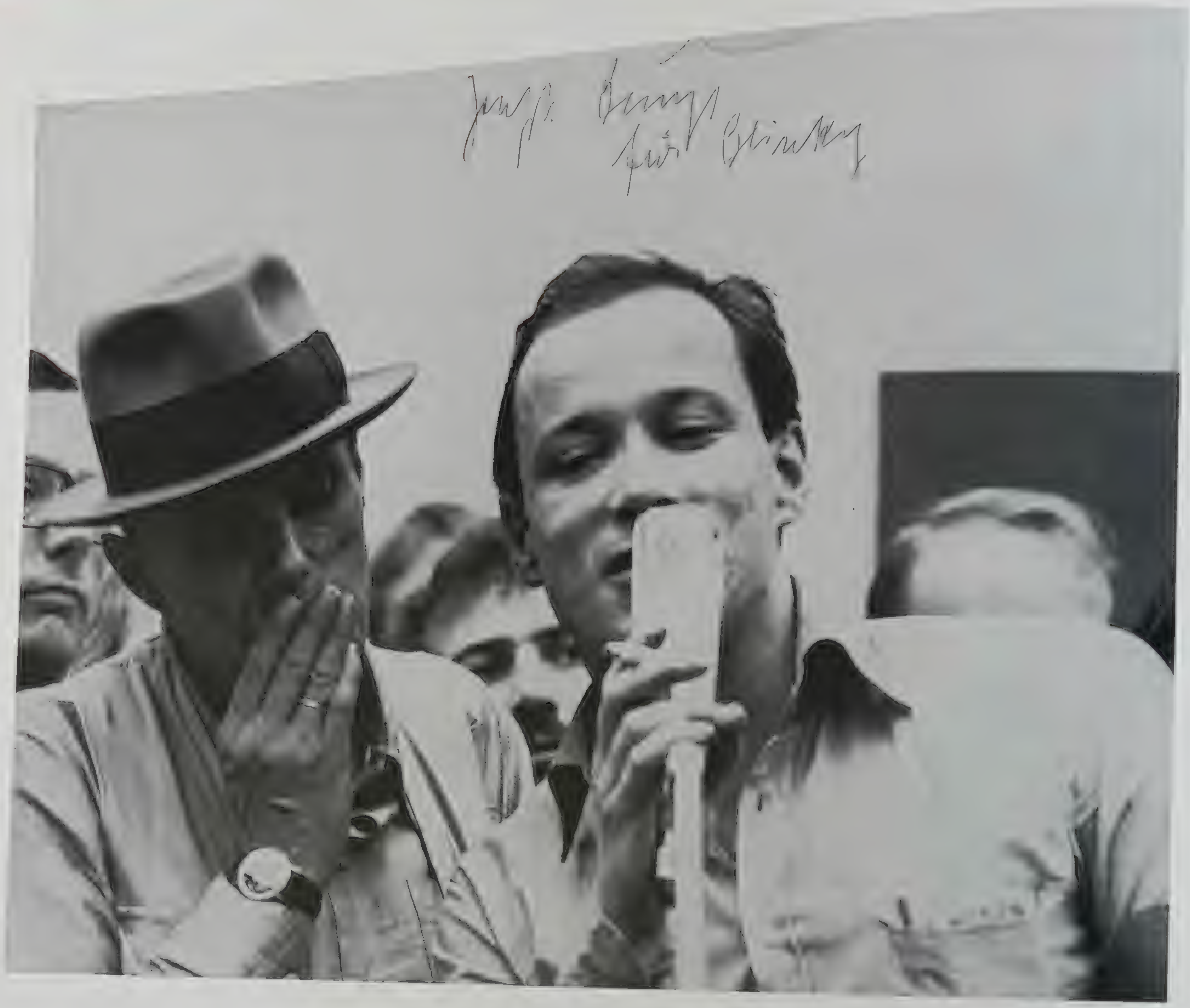

Joseph Beuys
für Blinky

Fig. 9 Joseph Beuys, *Für Blinky* (For Blinky), c. 1980. Photograph with dedication and signature, 23.7 x 30.5 cm. Collection of Erhard Klein.

their work. Thus Immendorff recalled that he and Palermo kept their work in piles, which Beuys would look through, separating good from bad without giving any criteria for his decisions. According to Immendorff, "the reconstruction of these criteria, that was the work he imposed on us."[24] Given the public nature of Beuys's later work one ought to stress that his own artistic practice did not function as a guide for students during these early years, for he rarely talked about it, and most students claim that they knew little or nothing about it.[25]

This imposition of freedom, so to speak, combined with the students' lack of familiarity with Beuys's work, accounts for the extraordinary variety of art produced in the class during the 1960s as well as for the remarkable absence of imitations of Beuys's work. Unaffected by the fact that they were taking a sculpture class led by an artist who was known largely for performances, many students, including Immendorff, Knoebel, Tadeusz, and Palermo, chose to paint. Medium became a bond. Tadeusz and Anatol Herzfeld, a former policeman turned art student, were among Palermo's early close friends, and together they formed a kind of "gang." Despite their different approaches to painting, Immendorff, Palermo, Knoebel, and Imi Giese began working in Raum 19 (Room 19), a small room next door to the main classroom, starting in 1965. Starting probably around the time of Immendorff and Palermo's departure from the academy, Giese and Knoebel began to keep the room locked and inaccessible to other students—even to Beuys. That radical gesture made Raum 19 legendary, but in merely choosing to work in a separate room Giese, Immendorff, Knoebel, and Palermo had already made a movement toward independence from their teacher, and this experience became a point of reference for a later collaboration between Palermo and Knoebel (see figs. 139 and 140). Perhaps a bold assertion of independence is what Beuys's students needed as the sixties progressed, when their teacher's work became better known and his classroom more open.

The Raum 19 group reconfigured Beuys's language of poor yet suggestive materials. For his best-known installation, *Raum 19*, made there, Knoebel used cheap fiberboard with a ready-made brown color known from Beuys's work as Braunkreuz (see fig. 138).[26] Palermo's work likewise reformulated Beuys's language. Despite Beuys's belief in fostering individual development, a trait which Palermo acknowledged and valued, Palermo's professional development as an artist—in particular, the formation of his objects—and the reception of his art are inseparable from his teacher's influence. Some connections seem to have been strategically constructed by Beuys, Palermo's dealers, or critics; others evidence Palermo's active engagement with Beuys's work.

Although Palermo's lack of interest in politics appears to be a departure from Beuys, Beuys himself insisted that Palermo's work had broad social implications. In an extensive interview about his student with Laszlo Glozer he referred to Palermo's spatial interventions and cited his membership in the Organization for Direct Democracy.[27] A photograph that appeared in the catalogue of the 1980 Galerie-Verein retrospective inscribed "Joseph Beuys/für Blinky" apparently underscores Beuys's claims: Palermo speaks into a microphone standing next to his former teacher at the Frankfurt *mit, neben, gegen* exhibition—a tribute to Palermo as a public, activist figure in the image of Beuys himself (fig. 9). But even Beuys conceded that this was not the Palermo he knew. In the interview he also describes his student's quiet and withdrawn nature, and for an edition based on photographs of Palermo published by the dealer Erhard Klein in 1980, Beuys explicitly decided against using this public portrait, opting instead for a picture taken on the same occasion that showed the student with his eyes closed, almost disappearing behind his pensive teacher's shoulder.[28] Palermo's trancelike expression, especially in conjunction with Beuys's wistful look, better fit Klein and Beuys's posthumous homage to Palermo.[29]

Beuys had shaped Palermo's public image from the start. In an unusual gesture of faith in a twenty-two-year-old who had spent barely a year under his tutelage, Beuys recommended Palermo for inclusion in Alfred Schmela's group exhibition *Weiss—Weiss*, on view from September to October 1965. The other work being shown there must have struck Beuys as offering a suitable context for Palermo's debut into the German art world. Beuys's own contributions, *Weisser Fisch* (White Fish) and *Weisse Wurst* (White Sausage), fluctuate between the banal materiality of the roughly textured fish and sausage and its transcendence through the pieces' isolation on the wall and their whiteness (fig. 10). The same interplay characterized most of the works in the exhibition: white paintings and objects by contemporary European artists ranging from the Italian monochrome painters Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni to Zero members Piene and Uecker and the kineticists Rafael Soto and Jean Tinguely.[30] All these artists had moved away from existentialist Informel dogma by playing with the polarities of materiality and transcendence, reality and illusion. Palermo's contribution is lost, but Beuys rightly saw the young artist as working in a similar mode, and the exhibition placed Palermo's art firmly within the framework of meanings created by Beuys and important abstract artists of the time.[31]

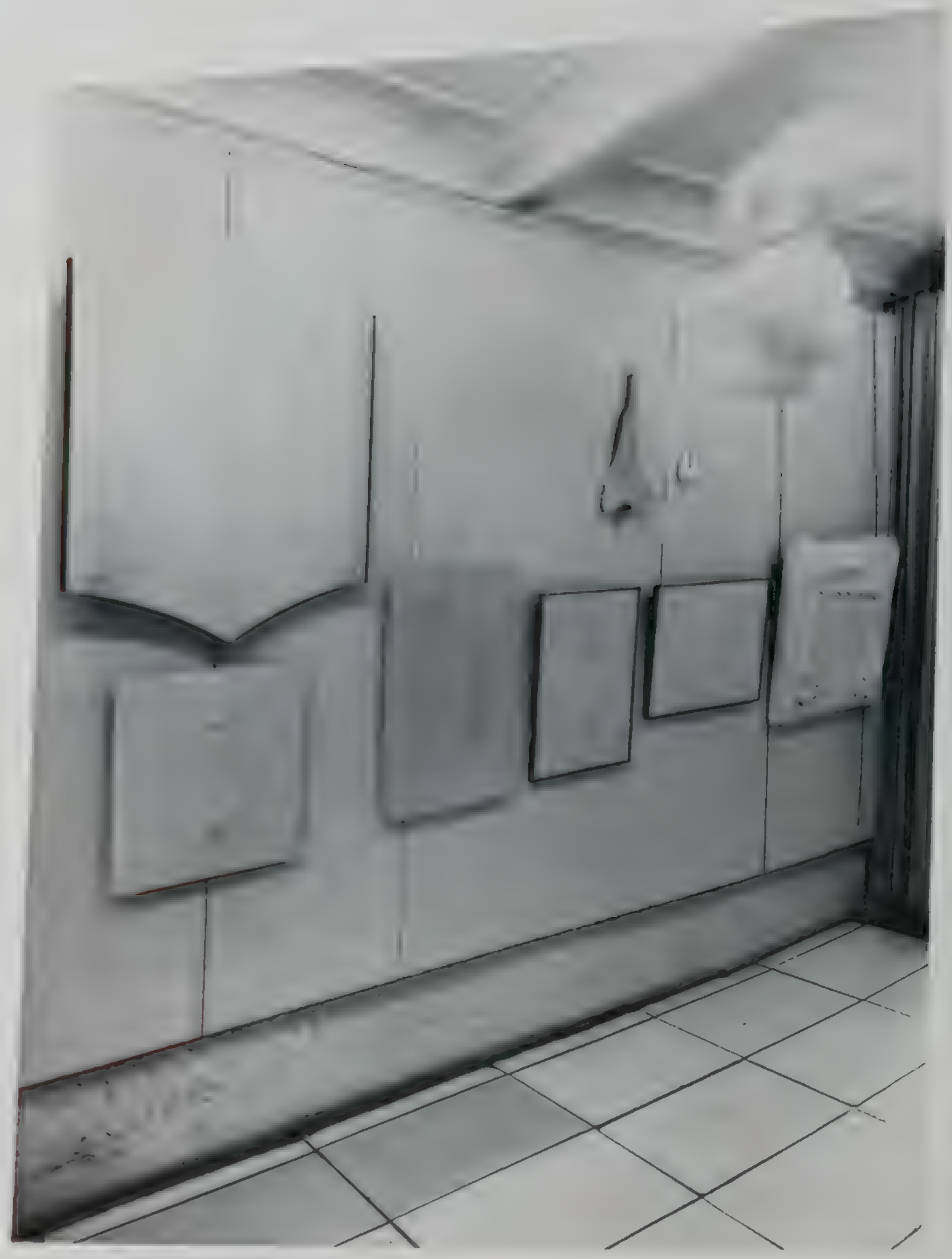


Fig. 10 Exhibition *Weiss—Weiss* (White—White) at Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf, September–October 1965, with Joseph Beuys, *Weisser Fisch* (White Fish) and *Weisse Wurst* (White Sausage), both 1964, at top center; other works by Enrico Castellani, Ferdinand Spindel, Uli Pohl, Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, Bram Bogart

Beuys continued to help Palermo move into the public arena. Palermo's first one-man exhibition, a selection of early objects and paintings, was held in May 1966 at Munich's Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem (fig. 11)—although Peter Bode, a critic for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, one of the leading national newspapers, gave it an unfavorable review, citing the works' careless "slipshod" fabrication and judging "the pure and tensionless accumulation of small blue triangles, banal diamond shapes, lines, diagonals, and meaningless monochrome planes" to be "the most boring thing this gallery has exhibited since its founding."[32] Beuys would frequently invite the dealer Heiner Friedrich to the academy and recommend students to him, and Friedrich may initially have encountered Palermo's work at the *Akademierundgang*, the academy's biannual exhibition of student work, in February 1966 (fig. 12). Friedrich and his business

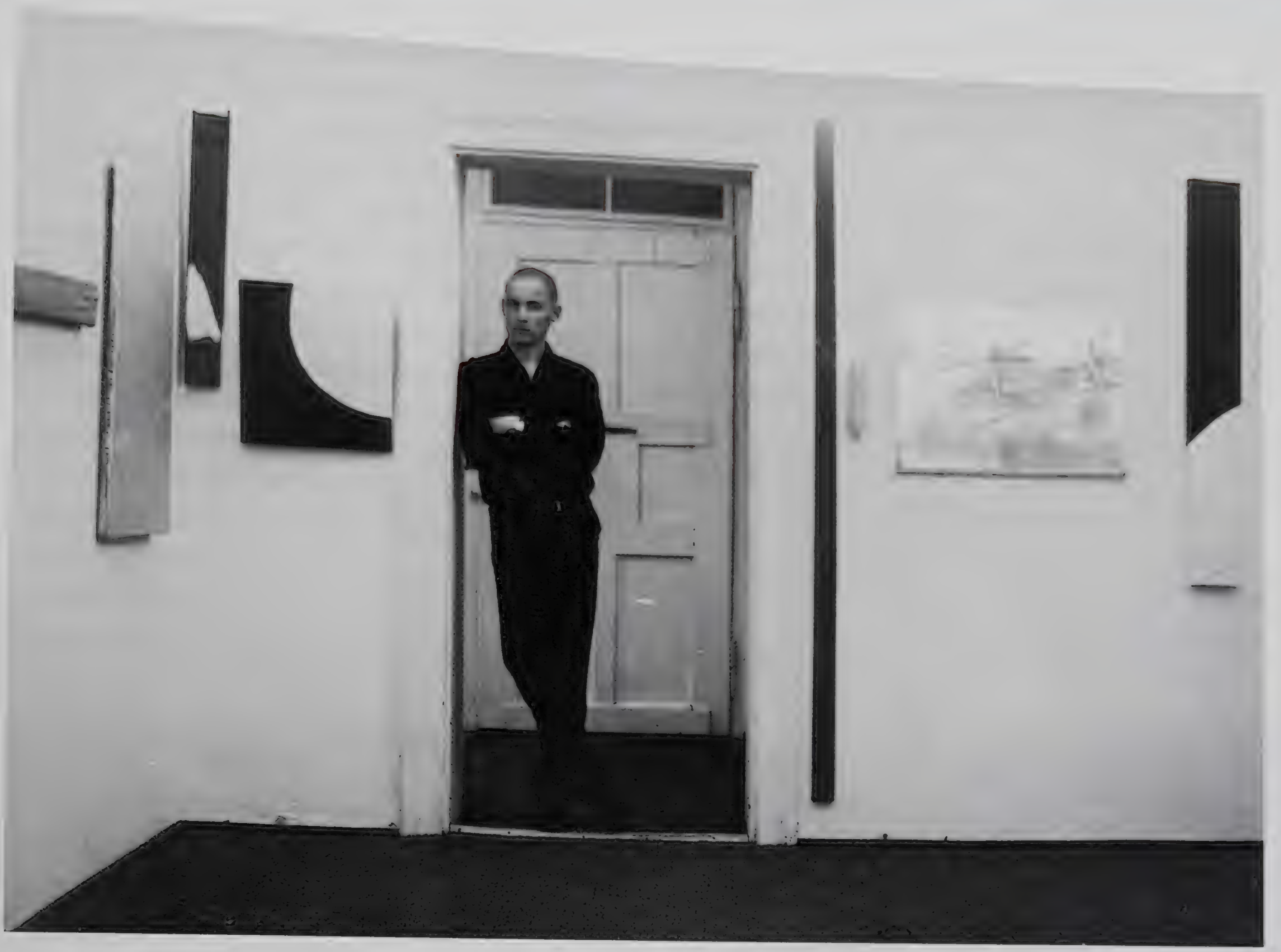


Fig. 11 Palermo at his exhibition *Palermo. Bilder und Zeichnungen*, Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem, Munich, 24 May–4 July 1966

partner, Franz Dahlem, had opened their gallery three years earlier and had quickly turned it into a leading venue for contemporary art by Americans and young Germans. The gallery's stable of artists during the 1960s included Dan Flavin, Walter De Maria, Fred Sandback, and Gerhard Richter, and landmark installations such as De Maria's *Earth Room* and Mel Bochner's *Measurement Room* were first made for its rooms. Dahlem left the gallery a year after Palermo's first exhibition there, and Friedrich subsequently ran it with his wife, Six Friedrich, under the name Galerie Heiner Friedrich, with additional help later on from Fred Jahn and Sabine Knust. In 1970 a branch was opened in Cologne under the directorship of Thordis Moeller. Palermo developed close ties with all the dealers, Friedrich and Moeller in particular, and he exhibited at their galleries throughout his lifetime, even following Friedrich to New York, where the dealer established a New York branch and eventually founded the Dia Art Foundation with his new wife, Philippa de Menil.[33]

If Beuys facilitated Palermo's entry into the German art world, that world in turn began to see Palermo solely in terms of Beuys. Palermo reportedly believed that his role as Beuys's Meisterschüler distorted the perception of his paintings, yet exhibition catalogues from the 1970s on consistently repeated this information in their biographies.[34] Usually an artistic kinship between teacher and student was forged more subtly though, for example through the inclusion in the 1973 exhibition and catalogue surveying Palermo's objects of a passage from

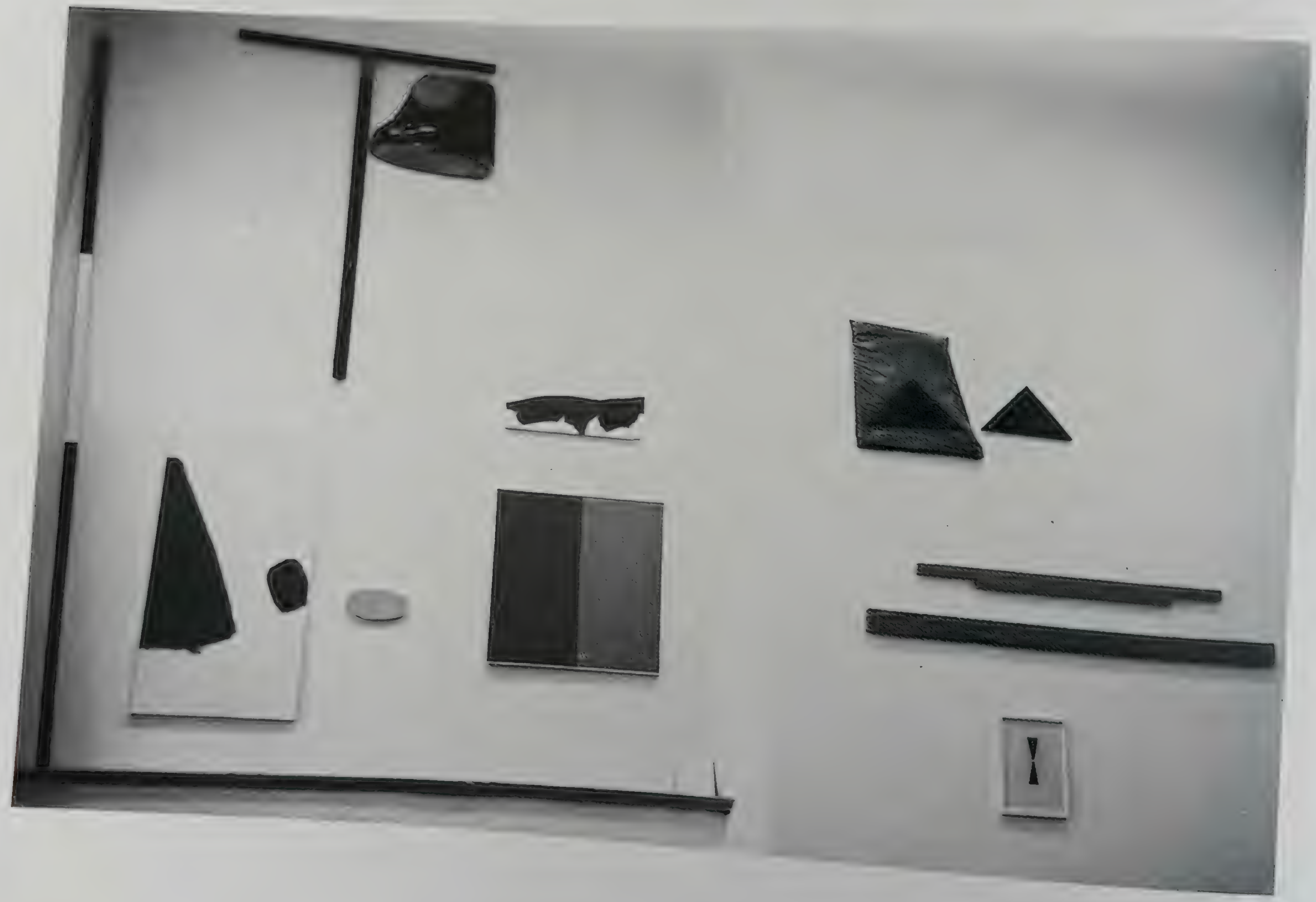


Fig. 12 *Akademierundgang* exhibition, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, c. 1966–67

James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which had been suggested by "a gallerist" to intimate, it seems, a relation with Beuys's 1961 proposal to extend the novel.[35] The first retrospective catalogue from the Galerie-Verein also included a reprint of the *Ulysses* passage. Beuys looms large over the publication—in a sequence of photographs of the two artists, including the "activist" image (see fig. 9); in the texts, which have several references to Beuys; in reproductions of numerous drawings that bear a strong resemblance to Beuys's work on paper; and in the decision to illustrate a large number of objects at the expense of Palermo's other work groups, which are represented by only a handful of examples.

One photograph of objects waiting to be hung is of particular interest here (fig. 13).[36] Four wooden framing members, each stemming from a different object by Palermo, lean vertically against the wall in fairly even intervals. The allusion to Beuys's installations of long, angled staffs wrapped in felt leaning against a wall, well known from exhibitions such as Documenta 4 (fig. 14), is blatant. Unlike the *Ulysses* reference, though, the staff was on Palermo's mind too.

PAINTED STAFFS, FOR J. BEUYS

Surely the most important lesson Palermo learned from Beuys was to ask, as Beuys did, "why forms look a certain way": what types of materials are used and why, what they provoke, what they bring about.[37] This lesson bore fruit only later, though, in groups of works that are related not in stylistic terms but through their historically meaningful use of abstract

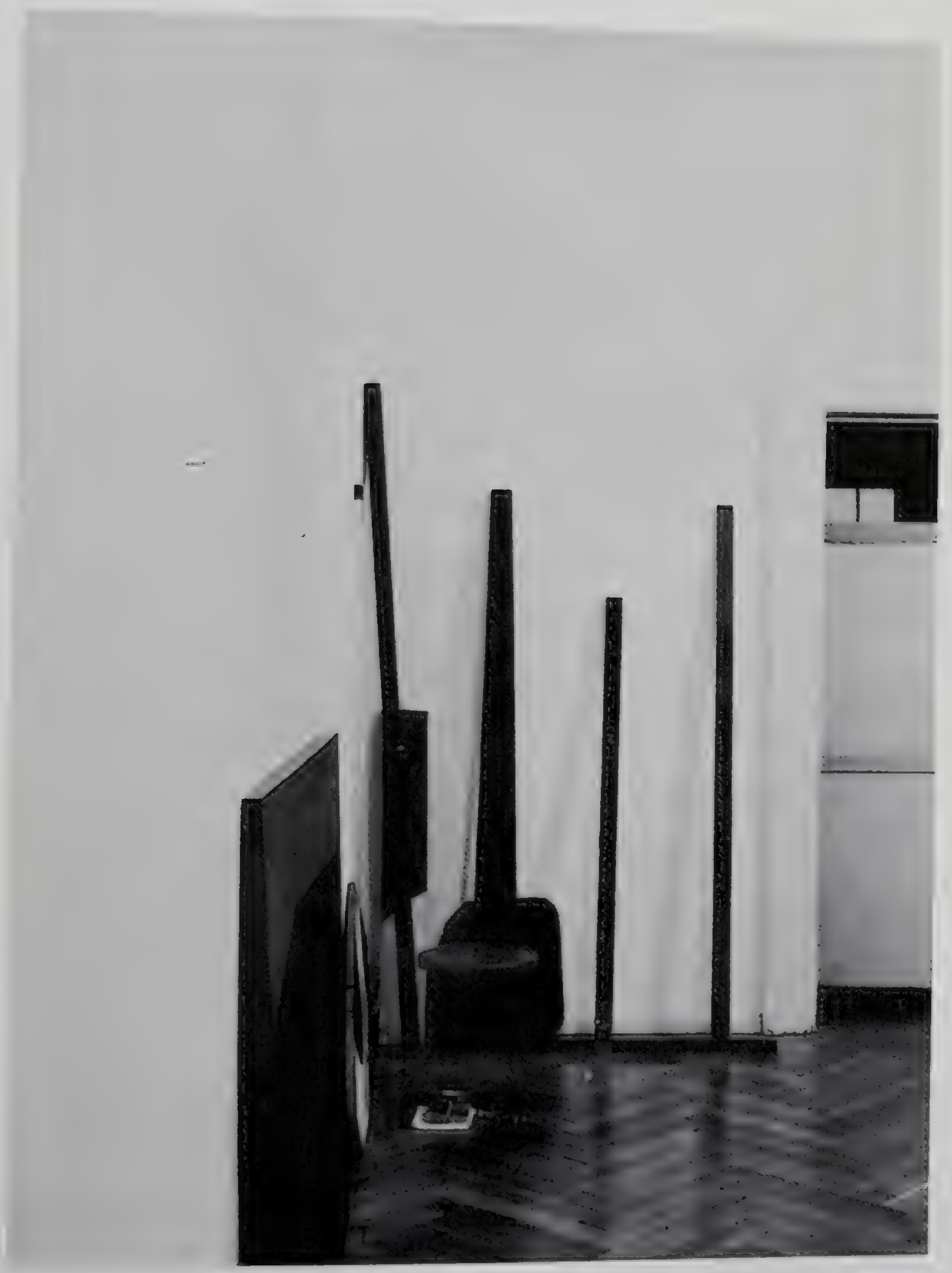


Fig. 13 *Widenmayerstrasse*, 1980, from *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, p. 48

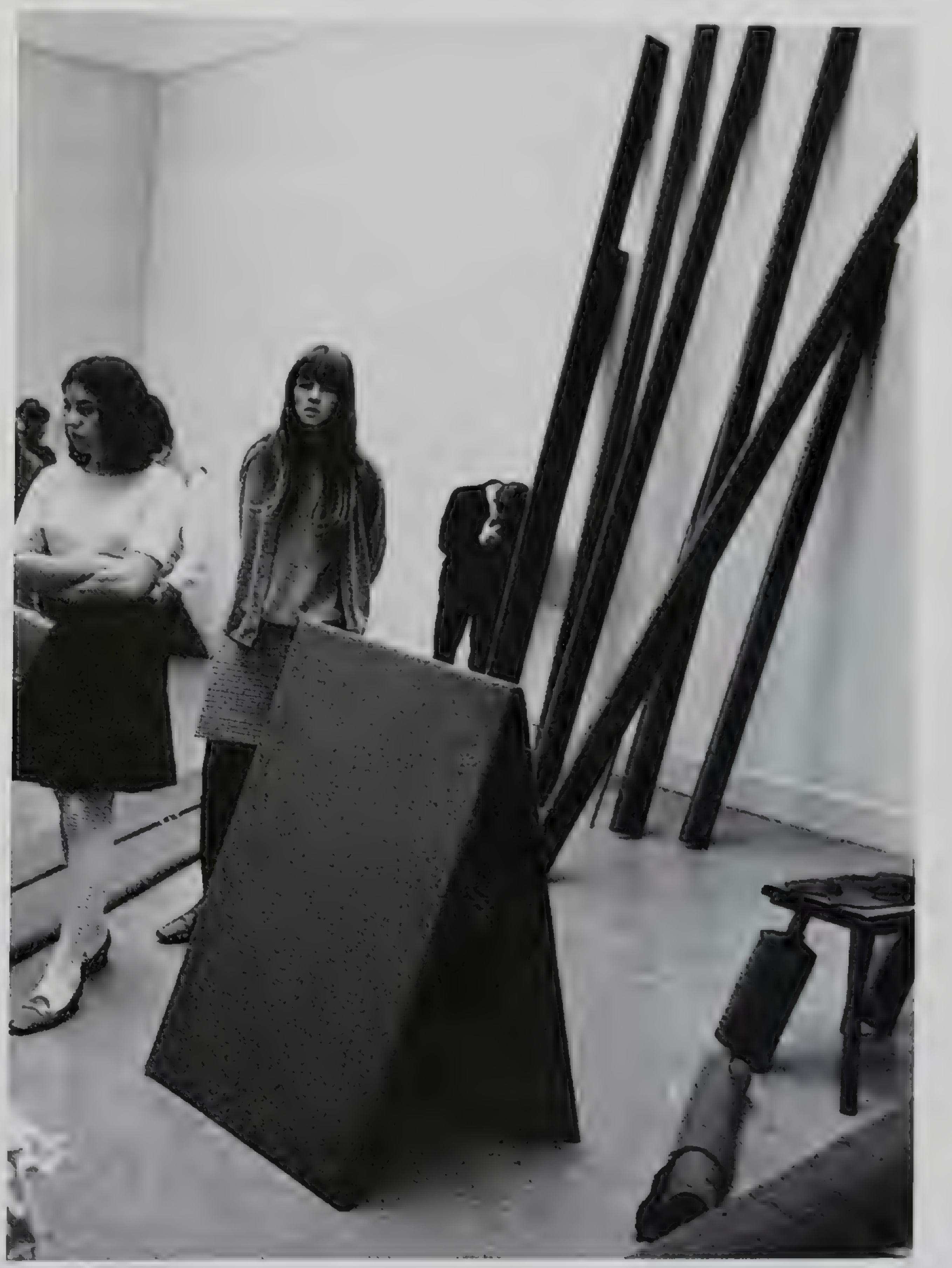


Fig. 14 Joseph Beuys, room at Documenta 4, 27 June–6 October 1968, with works drawn largely from performances, including *Eurasienstäbe* (Eurasian Staffs) and *Filzwinkel* (Felt Angles) dating from 1964–67. Part of *Block Beuys*, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt.

forms, colors, and materials: the cloth pictures, wall paintings, and metal pictures.

Nevertheless, the influence of Beuys's work manifests itself most clearly in Palermo's objects and in their prominent use of a vertical element. Palermo's work changed when he entered Beuys's class.[38] "The change took place about two or three weeks after he entered my class," Beuys recounted. "He radically altered the old work he had been doing under Goller —and I think his reasons were sound. Now he tried to do entirely nonobjective conceptions, to draw simple lines or squares."[39] Despite his claims to the contrary, Beuys had little to do with Palermo's "radical" change from "old," Goller-inspired, organic shapes to the "nonobjective conceptions," for Palermo had already created a sequence of four abstract works on paper in 1963, before his switch to Beuys's class.[40] By contrast, Palermo's subsequent shift toward an object-based form of painting shows a clear influence, though it stems less from Beuys's teaching than from Beuys's art, which Palermo had already encountered before entering the class.

Palermo's first two objects date from 1964. These are elongated pieces of wood wrapped in Nessel, a fabric similar to muslin, and painted with oils, a mode of construction Palermo would more or less stick with for most subsequent objects. What is probably the earlier object reads horizontally while the other one is vertically oriented, about two meters long, and painted in bright colors—the upper and lower ends are blue, the center is red, and there are two small red stripes painted over the blue in the lower end and a bright green X in the upper red area (fig. 15). The elongated surface constrains the paint marks, showing Palermo's transition from painted surfaces to painted objects that take command of the surrounding wall through their increasingly three-dimensional and material qualities. Palermo's decision to abandon the horizontal format of the first object when the young student had just entered Beuys's class appears deliberate, for vertical elements played a central role in the work of his new teacher around this time.[41]

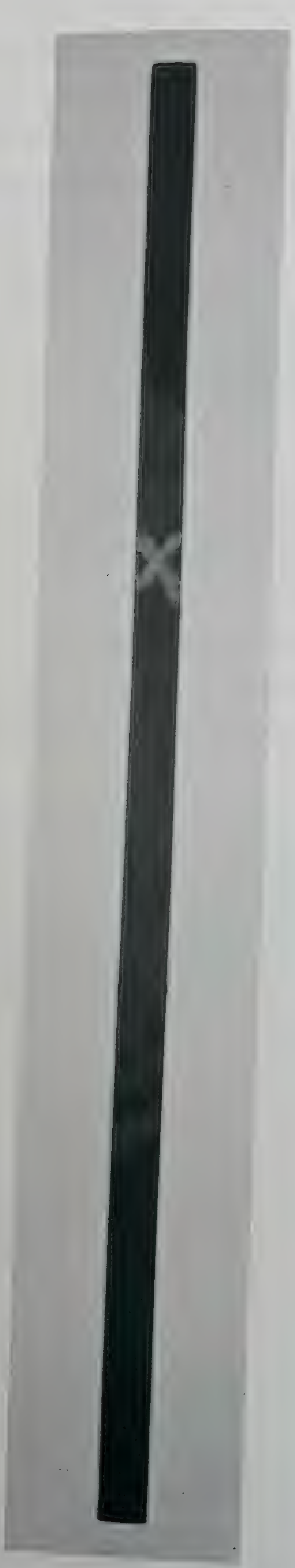


Fig. 15 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 14), 1964. Oil on Nessel over wooden slat, 204 x 6.5 x 2 cm. Collection of Michael and Christine Tacke, Munich.

Beuys's early students contend that they knew little about their teacher's work at the time, yet many of them did see his one-man exhibition, . . . *irgend ein Strang*. . . (. . . any one strand. . .) at Galerie Schmela in 1965 (fig. 16) and had attended his legendary opening performance on 26 November, *wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt* (How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare).[42] Beuys confirms that Palermo mainly knew of his performances, or "actions," and was less acquainted with his sculptural work, which still dominated Beuys's output during this time. "When Palermo came to me, that was roughly the coordinating point of the action era. The things of mine that he saw were mostly actions, and not so many paintings. He saw forms that originated from the actions, for example those felt angles, or *The Red Cross on the Felt Piano*, the action in the academy with John Cage and other Americans, with [Robert] Morris and Yvonne Rainer, for example. Palermo was tremendously fascinated. And, of course, those actions included forms that interested him profoundly."[43] Palermo was still in Goller's class when he attended the actions Beuys had in mind here, with which he first caught the public eye in 1964, including *Sibirische Symphonie 1. Satz* (Siberian Symphony No. 1) and *Komposition für 2 Musikanten* (Composition for Two Musicians) at the *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* on 2 and 3 February at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and his controversial *Kukei, akopee—Nein! Braunkreuz, Fettecken, Modellfettecken* (Kukei, akopee—No! Braunkreuz, Fatcorners, Modelfatcorners) performed during the *Festival der Neuen Kunst* (Festival of New Art) at the Technische Hochschule Aachen on 20 July (fig. 17).[44]

The Aachen performance marked one of the first times Beuys used a pole in a prominent way: the sequence in which he manipulated a meter-long felt-wrapped copper rod was the very one that was famously interrupted by a student striking the artist in the face.[45] Beuys repeatedly used vertical elements in subsequent years, both as a semi-ritual tool during performances and as a sculptural element that was merely suggestive of such usage in his installations.

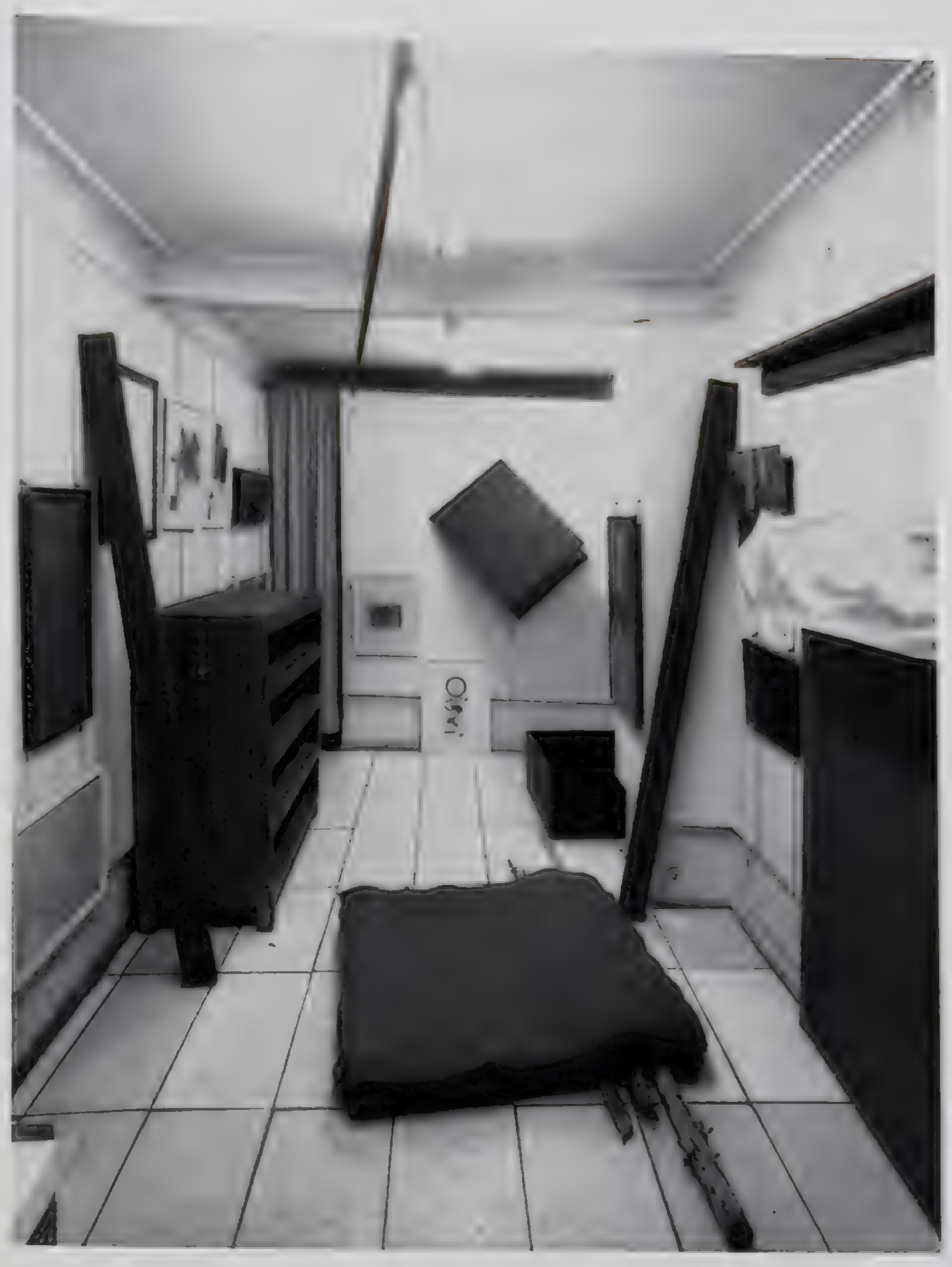


Fig. 16 Joseph Beuys, . . . *irgend ein Strang* . . . (. . . any one strand . . .) exhibition at Galerie Schmela Düsseldorf, 26 November–31 December 1965

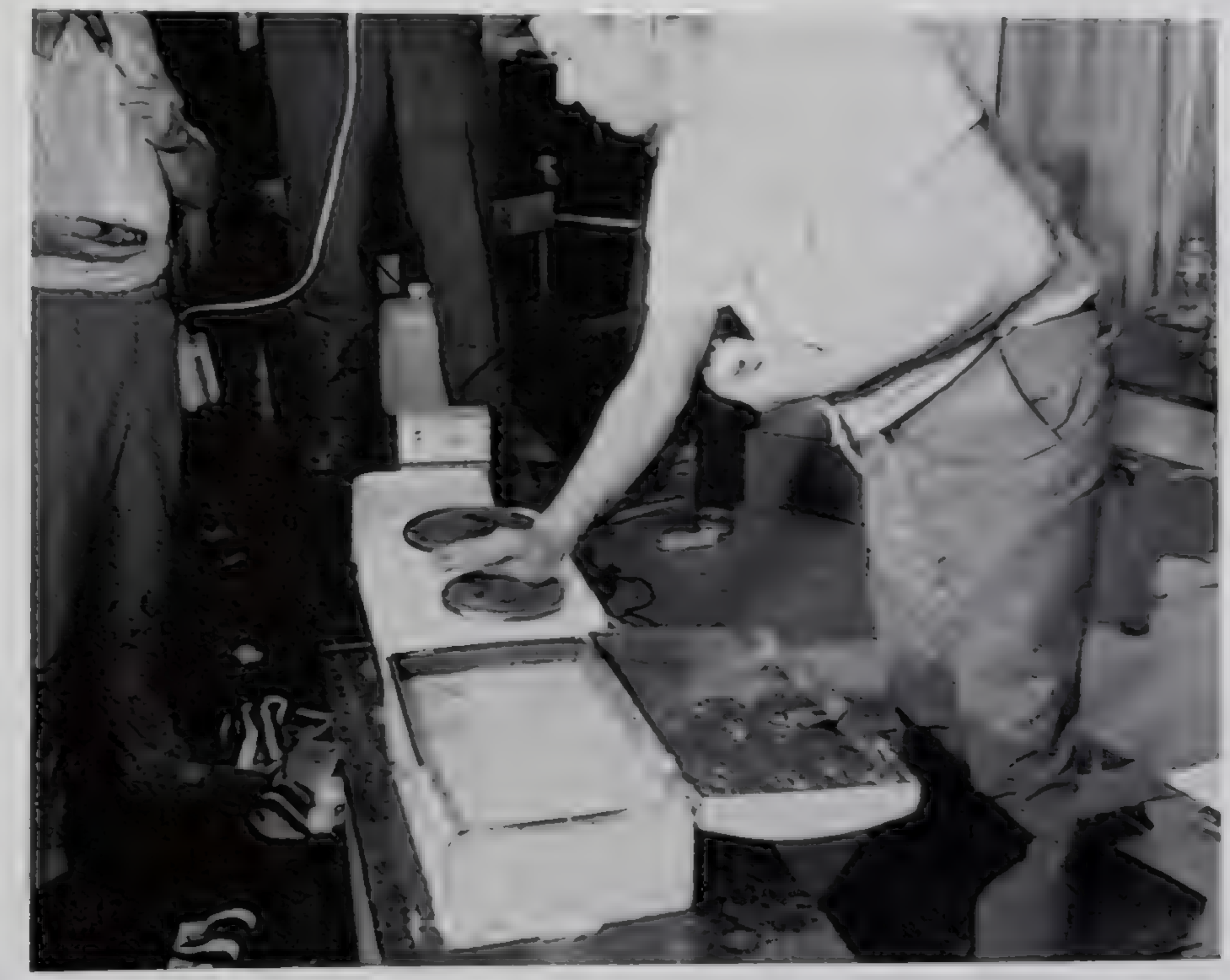


Fig. 17 Joseph Beuys, *Kukei, akopee—Nein! Braunkreuz, Fettecken, Modellfettecken* (Kukei, akopee—No! Braunkreuz, Fatcorners, Modelfatcorners), performance at the Festival der Neuen Kunst, Technische Hochschule, Aachen, 20 July 1964

For the opening performance of the 1965 Schmela exhibition, which Palermo might well have attended, although this is uncertain, Beuys also carried two long, angular, felt-wrapped elements from the front to the back of the gallery. Although the props Beuys used in his performances appear diverse at first sight, they were all essentially vertical poles employed for demonstrative or ceremonial purposes. Beuys occasionally set them upright like totem poles, but most frequently they acted as staffs to direct the audience's gaze, to manipulate other objects or materials, to assert his presence, or to suggest shamanistic or symbolic activities.[46]

Poles also carried ritual connotations in Beuys's sculptural installations.[47] Most notable are the felt-wrapped polar angles, which first appeared in *2 90 Grad Filzwinkel* (2 90-Degree Felt Angles) and were first exhibited in 1964 at Beuys's classroom at the Düsseldorf academy. It is likely that Palermo saw them; indeed, we can assume that he saw leaning angular elements such as these repeatedly because they were among Beuys's most widely exhibited work during the sixties. The two angles were used again the subsequent year in Beuys's Schmela action and then exhibited there; they were later combined with four similar felt-wrapped angles and placed against the wall during the *Eurasienstab* (Eurasian Staff) performances, and employed with other angles for a 1967 Beuys exhibition at the Städtisches Museum in Mönchengladbach and for Beuys's room at the 1968 Documenta 4 exhibition in Kassel.[48]

If the staff is Beuys's signature motif, the vertical stafflike element was central also to most of Palermo's objects from 1964 until as late as 1976, which played with its cultic connotations and ultimately drained the motif of the meanings central to Beuys's use. Palermo's 1968 *Blaue Scheibe und Stab* (Blue Disk and Staff) consists of a two-and-a-half-meter-long beam and a thin wooden disk sixty-three centimeters in diameter, both wrapped in bright blue tape and leaning against the wall (fig. 18). The piece strikes a playful chord: the disk implies movement, an accidental rolling away from the staff, its other half. (Someone actually took the original disk away during the opening of the exhibition where it was first shown, and it had to be replaced.)[49] Palermo's staff is ever so slightly twisted as if it had been bent over time by the force of its own weight; the choice suggests that it had rested in place for a while, rather than being temporarily put aside. The gravity, the seriousness, the ritual use, and the transcendental aura of Beuys's leaning staffs are decidedly absent.[50]

Palermo also incorporated the staff in the realm of painting. Whereas the sculptor Beuys retained the suggestion of human use by placing his staffs so as to appeal to the viewer's tactile sense—lying on the floor or leaning against the wall as if resting—Palermo often reduced his staffs to a stylistic element and canceled any sense of functionality by hanging them on the wall.[51] Echoing Beuys's wrapping of angles in felt, Palermo also wrapped his staffs in fabric, but he then painted most of them, no matter how confined the support was. As much as fifteen centimeters wide, some of these objects fluctuate between staff and ordinary canvas, too wide to be handled and too narrow to pass as traditional painting. Others use the staff in serial formations, as in two later untitled installations.[52] In one a series of vertical bars wrapped in fabric and painted white extends from baseboards to ceiling, almost but not quite touching these boundaries (fig. 19). Each bar was to be placed in a specific area of a room—respectively, framing a door, framing a wall, and hanging between two windows. The ritual connotations of the staffs are erased by their arrangement in a series and by their quasi-ornamental placement in relation to the architecture.[53]

Schmetterling I (Butterfly I) and the closely related *Schmetterling II* (Butterfly II) overturn the staff's ritual aura with wit and confidence. The 1967 version consists of a vertical object about two meters in length and tapering from eighteen centimeters in width at the bottom to slightly more than three centimeters at the top (fig. 20). While the front surface of the object is painted black with a greenish tint, its bright red edges are reflected on the surrounding

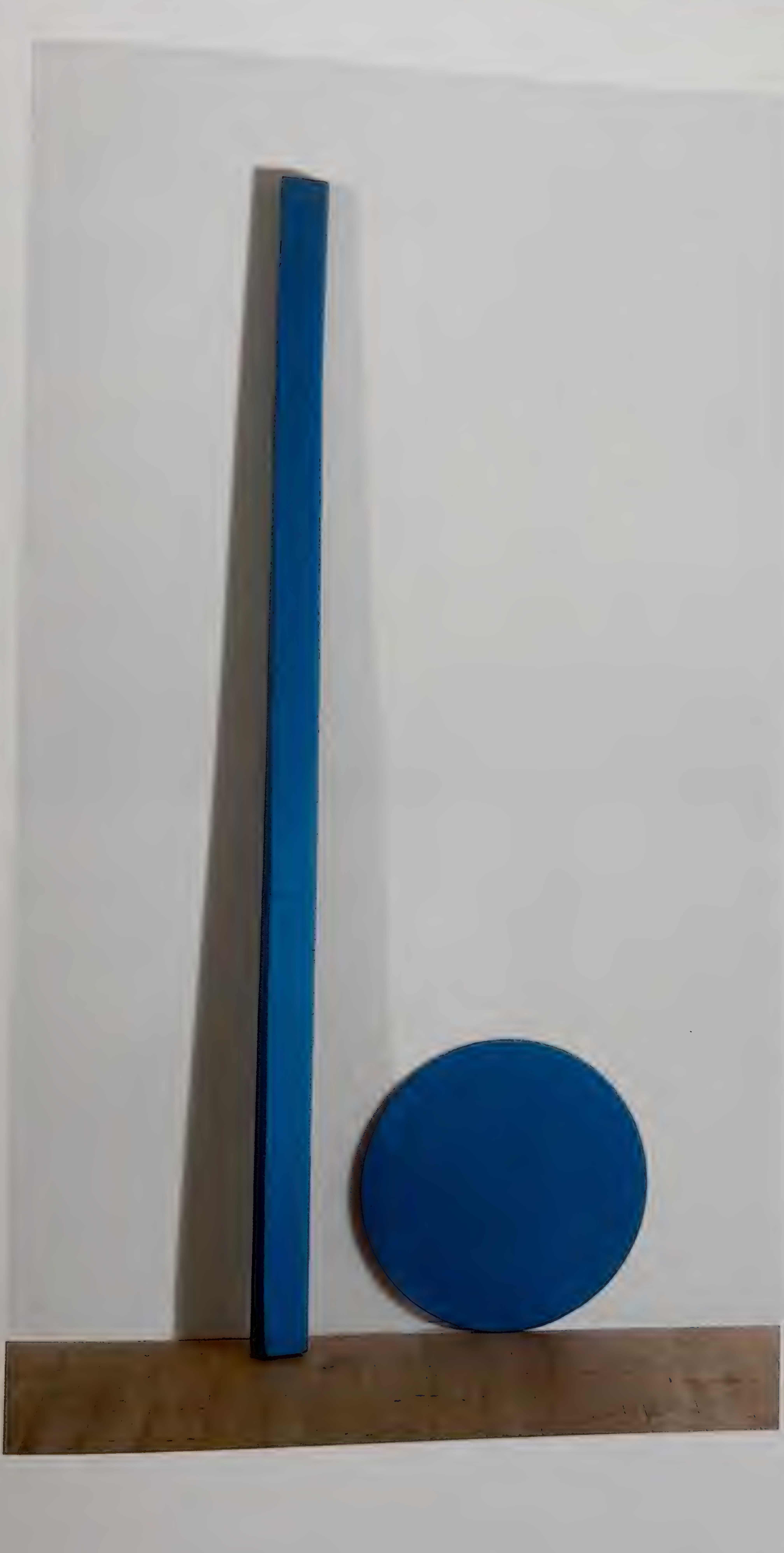


Fig. 18 *Blaue Scheibe und Stab* (Blue Disk and Staff) (*Wvz* 72), 1968. Wood and blue tape, staff: 251 x 9.8 (top)/10.3 (bottom) x 7.5 (top)/8 (bottom) cm; disk: 63 x 1.3 cm in diameter. Private collection.

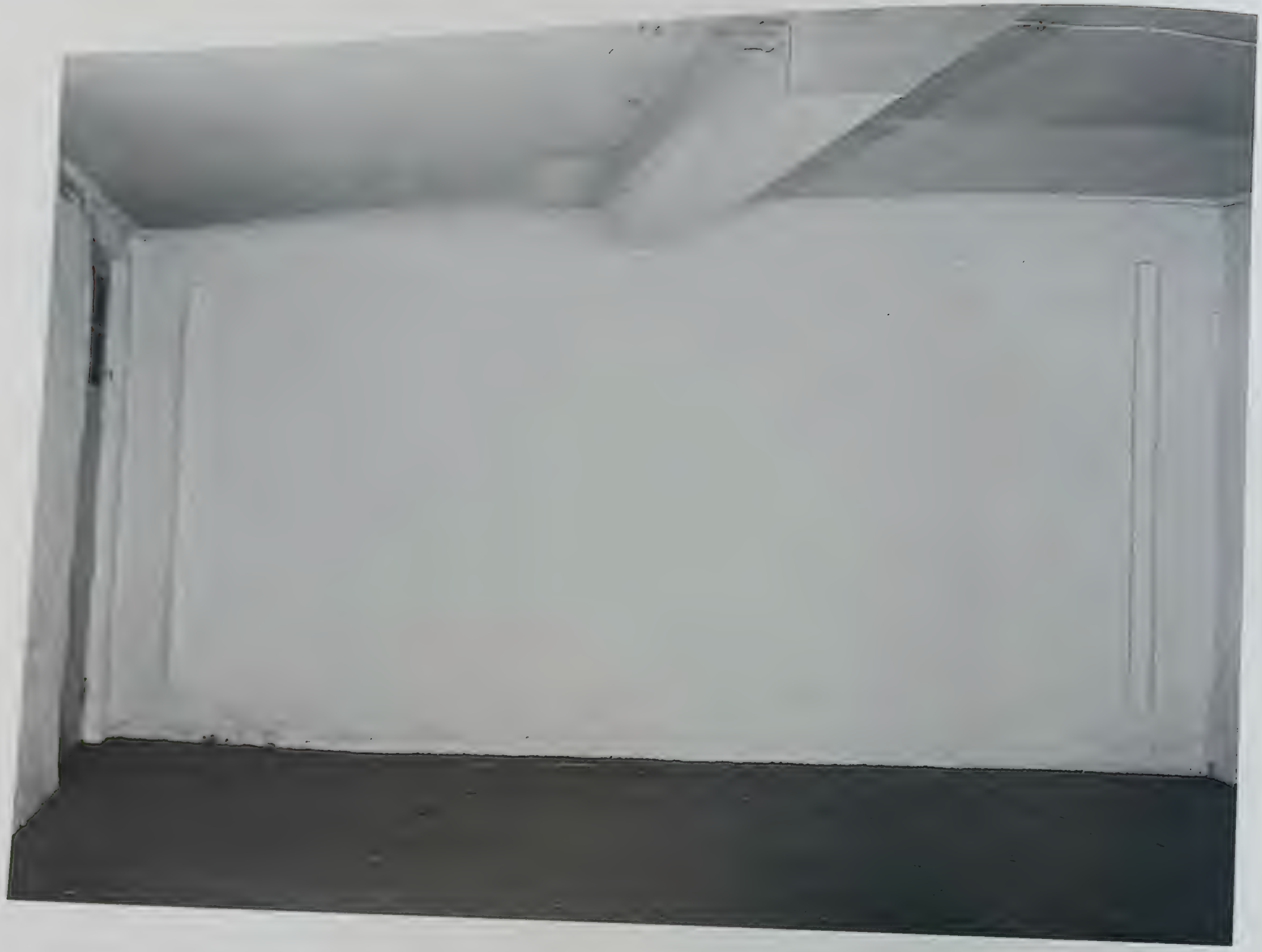
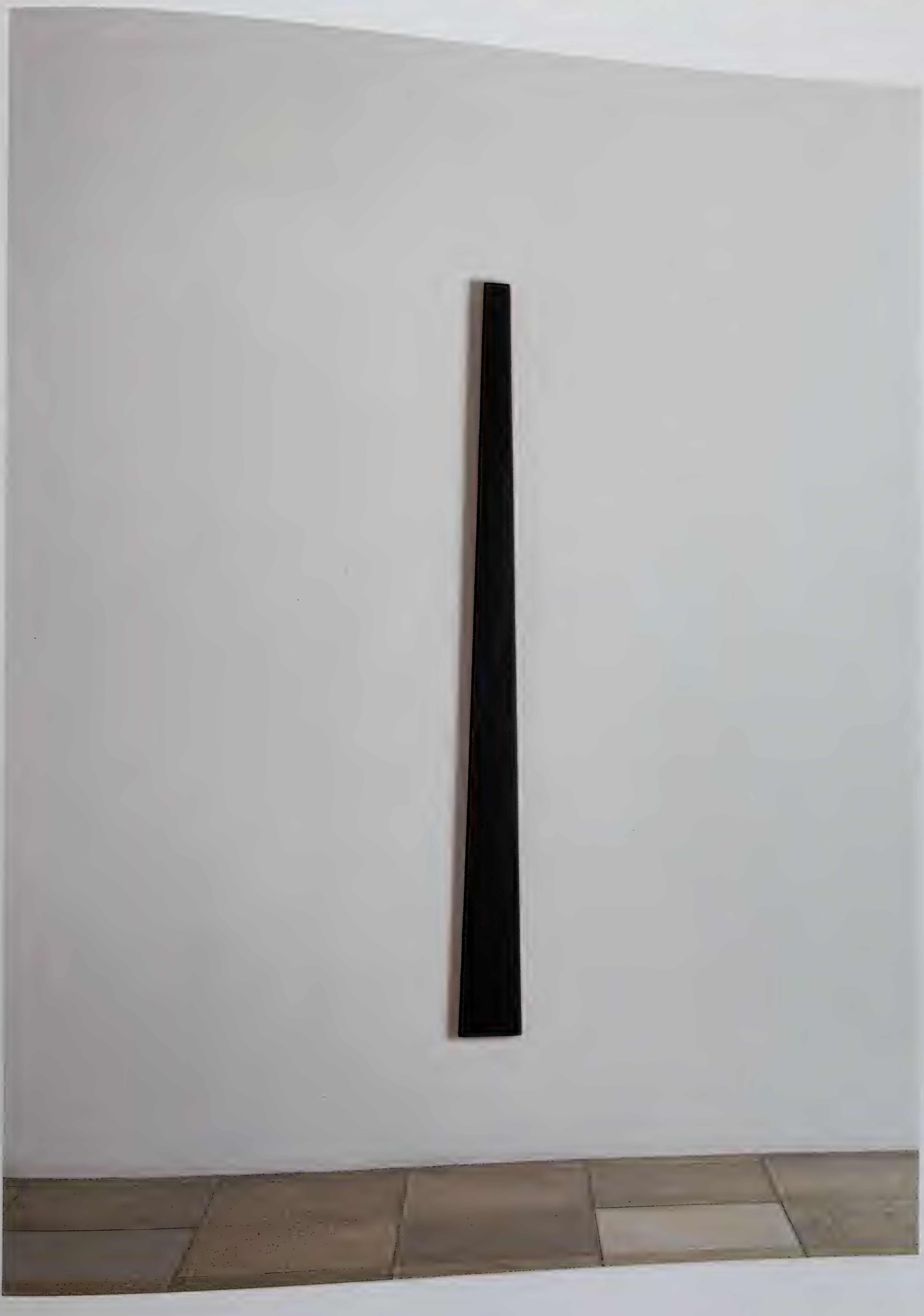


Fig. 19 *II (für eine grosse Wand)* (II [for a large wall]) (*Wvz* 154), 1972. Casein on Nessel over wood, each 240 x 10 x 7 cm. Private collection.

opposite

Fig. 20 *Schmetterling I* (Butterfly I) (*Wvz* 52), 1967. Oil on canvas over wood, 208 x 3.5 (top)/18 (bottom) cm. Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.



white wall (when viewed from the front) by a subtle light-orange glow. The rather banal source of this "halo" is thus readily recognizable, and the crooked edges of the later version are particularly visible from angled viewpoints. Any potentially transcendent or auratic effect of color is lightheartedly canceled out, for the literally immaterial reflection of color is closely tied to the utter materiality of its uneven support.[54] Palermo's choice to include *Schmetterling I* on the poster for the *Klasse Beuys* exhibition in Trier (fig. 21), and probably in the exhibition itself, highlights the precarious balance at the core of this object: its proximity to and simultaneous surreptitious departure from the art of his teacher.[55]

In the most obvious divergence from the ritual aura of Beuys's exclusively vertical staffs, Palermo added a horizontal member to his vertical elements, which likewise created an architectural connection and canceled any potential for using the staff as an instrument. The T shape made its first appearance in 1966 (see fig. 24), persisting until 1973; Palermo's continuous return to it suggests a more complicated relation to Beuys's work, as does its allusion to a cross. At the time Beuys had used crosses on several occasions, first whole crosses (with Christian or more generally cosmic connotations) in early small-scale sculptures, then crosses divided in half in his *Manresa* and *Eurasienstab* performances. Yet even Beuys's half crosses conjure up the memory of the whole or a desire for completion, thus referencing the symbolic meanings of the whole crosses.[56] Palermo's Ts are just that—lines in the form of a T—and the artist warded off allusions to a cross by presenting the shape in the most complete and unified form possible, counting on his viewers' familiarity with the letter to further that meaning. Beuys's half-crosses, to the contrary, are unmistakably crosses sliced in half. When Palermo first used Ts as self-contained objects rather than members of pairs, he colored them monochrome (dark green) and close-toned (red and orange), respectively, thus holding vertical and horizontal elements together as a complete shape. Dating from 1966, the dark-green object, along with *Graue Scheibe* (Gray Disk) and *Blaues Dreieck* (Blue Triangle) of the same year (see figs. 29 and 30), counts among the first monochromes Palermo made, and his simultaneous experimentation with a sense of wholeness in the first cloth pictures may have played a role in its conception.[57]

Why was there no place for the Beuysian staff in a later work Palermo explicitly dedicated to Beuys? The three-part object entitled *Für J. Beuys/unvollendet* (For J. Beuys/unfinished) was conceived as Palermo's contribution to the 1976 Frankfurt exhibition of Beuys's students (fig. 22). Tellingly, Palermo dates it "64–76" on the verso, despite the fact that the actual parts were definitely not made until the mid-1970s; Palermo did not work with metal during the 1960s. The designation of the time span and the work's original context suggest that Palermo was retrospectively assessing his career vis à vis Beuys, using aluminum, Palermo's preferred material by then. The piece on the left is an untreated aluminum version of his 1966 *Graue Scheibe*, in the center is a rectangular polished aluminum panel, and on the right is a metal picture painted in red with the black top and bottom borders characteristic of Palermo's work in New York from the mid-seventies on.

The gray disk evidently represents one of the first objects Palermo made that does not employ Beuys's immediate vocabulary, yet it was nevertheless inspired by his teacher's use of found materials. The last painted metal picture in turn represents the here and now of 1976 and the distance Palermo had traveled as an artist since making the disk, even since first entering Beuys's class in 1964, the date when the work was supposedly begun. We learn from Palermo himself that the central panel acts as a mirror and as an image of the self-recognition that took place along the way. In a diagram of the work published for the first time in 2004 by the conservator and art historian Pia Gottschaller, Palermo noted underneath the gray disk "free form, freedom"; underneath the central panel "mirror, recognition, logic, law"; and underneath the final member, "pure color, transformation, endless possibilities, freedom? expansion,

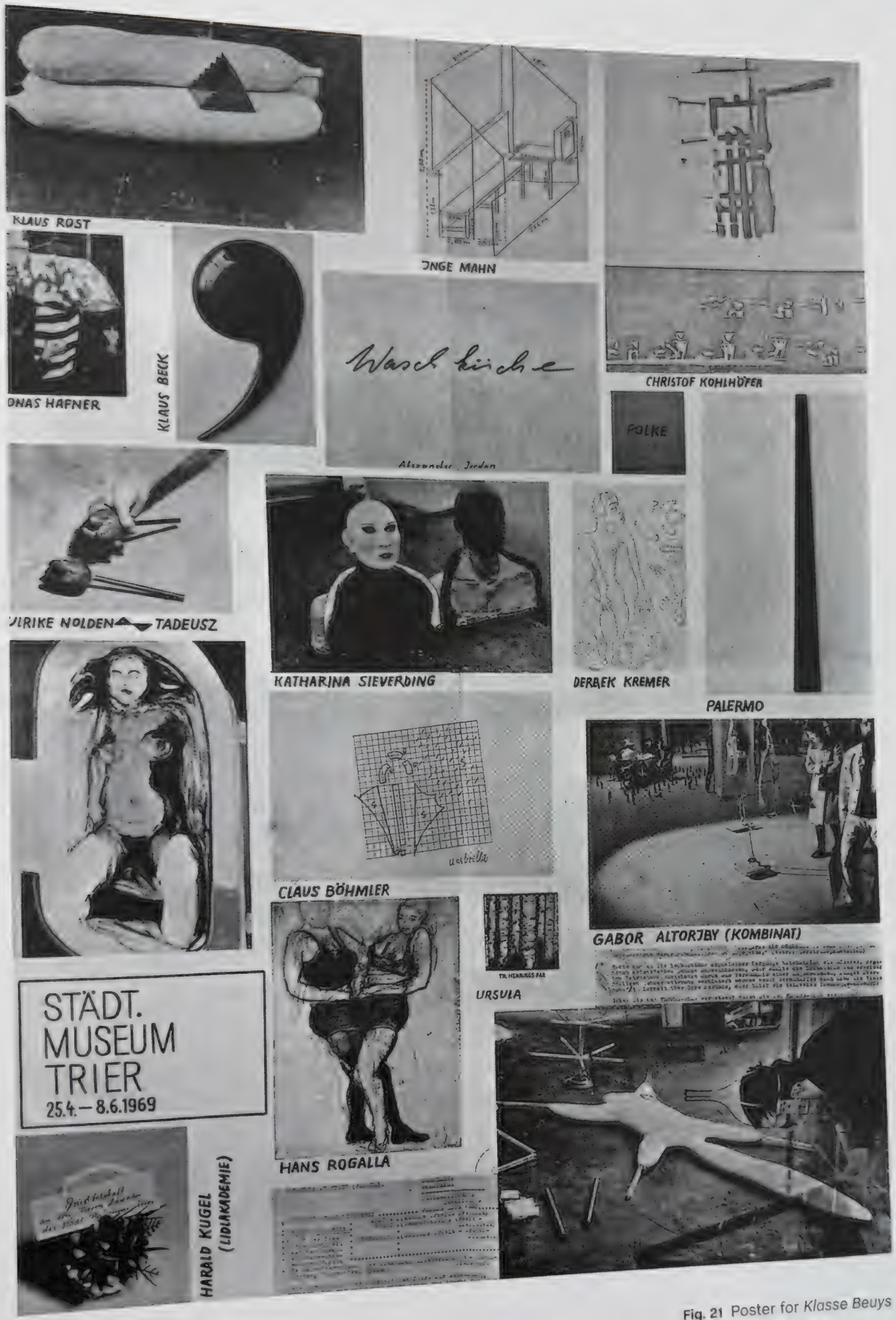

KLAUS ROST
JNGE MAHN
CHRISTOF KOHLHÖFER
ONAS HAFNER
KLAUS BECK
Wasch küche
Alexander Jordan
POLKE
LRIKE NOLDEN TADEUSZ
KATHARINA SIEVERDING
DERBEK KREMER
PALERMO
umbrella
CLAUS BÖHMLER
GABOR ALTORJAY (KOMBINAT)
URSULA
STÄDT.
MUSEUM
TRIER
25.4.–8.6.1969
HANS ROGALLA
HARALD KUGEL
(LIDLAKADEMIE)

Fig. 21 Poster for *Klasse Beuys* exhibition, 25 April–8 June 1969, Städtisches Museum Trier

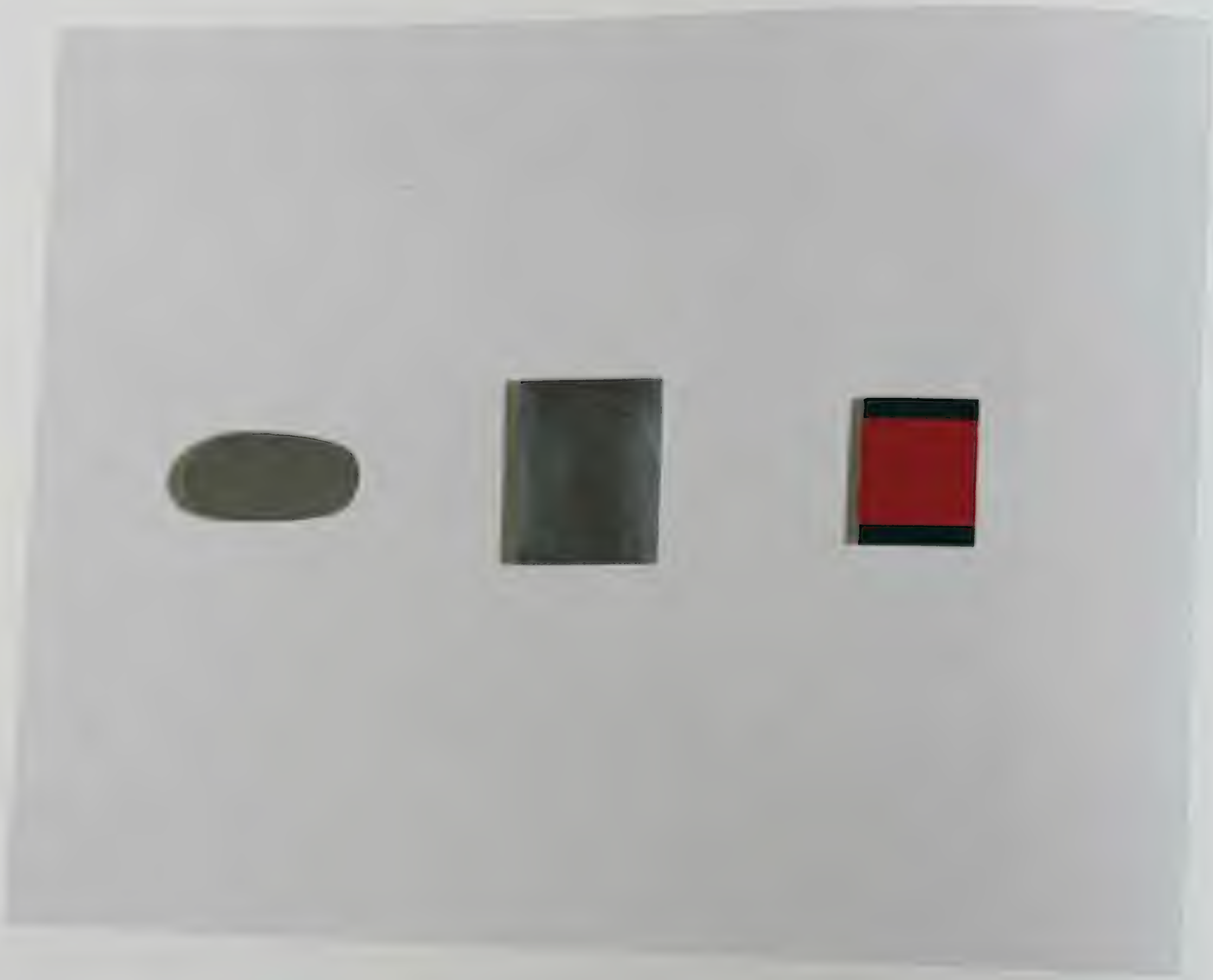


Fig. 22 *Für J. Beuys/unvollendet* (For J. Beuys/unfinished) (*Wvz* 194), 1964–76. Aluminum (untreated), aluminum (polished), and acrylic on aluminum, part 1: 13.2 x 26.3 x 0.3 cm; part 2: 26.7 x 20.8 x 0.3 cm; part 3: 21 x 16 x 0.2 cm. Private collection.

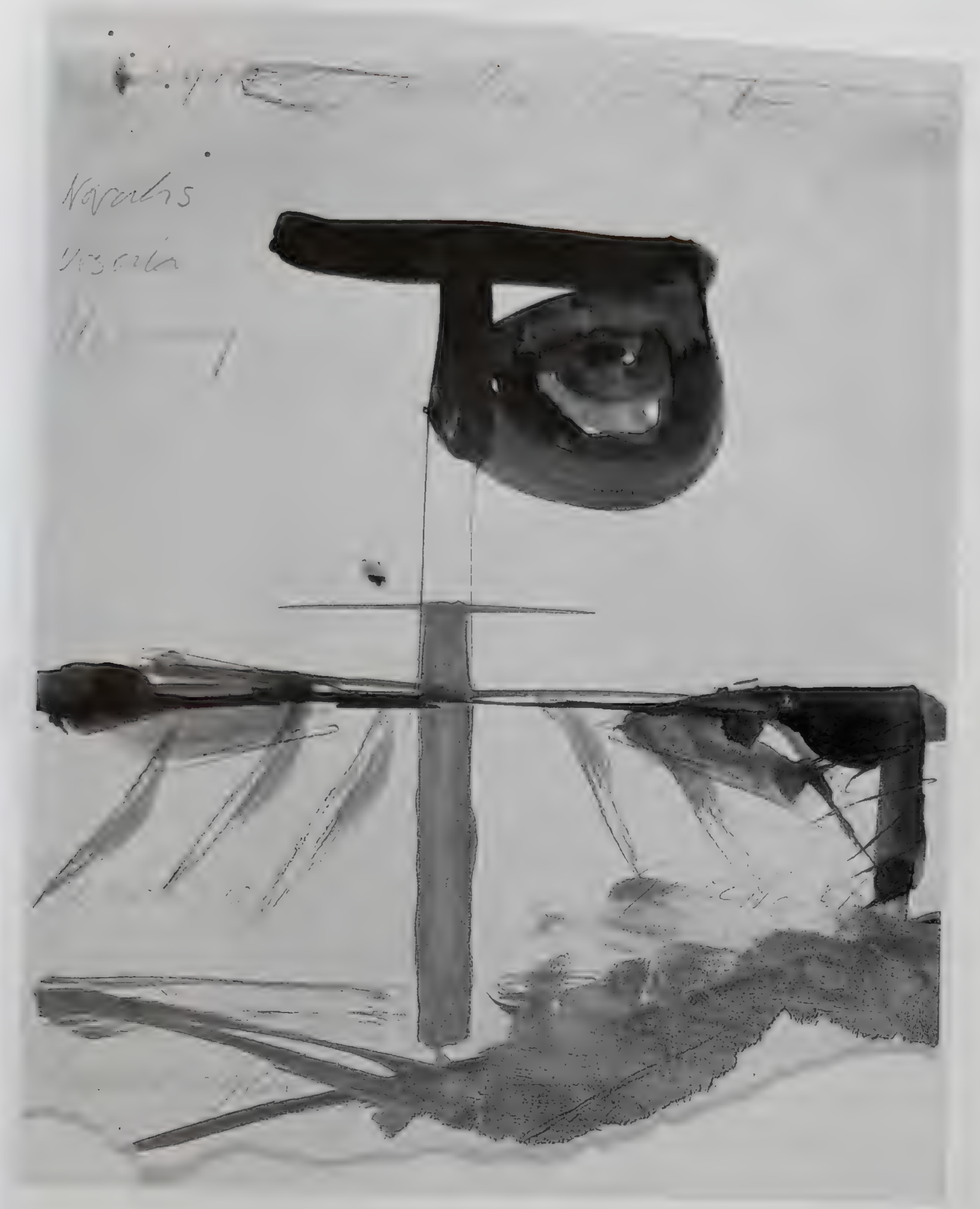


Fig. 23 *Hymne an die Nacht (für Novalis)* (Hymn to the Night [for Novalis]) (*Wvz* 305), c. 1967. Watercolor, silver bronze, and pencil on paper, 25 x 20 cm. Klüser Collection, Munich.

insight."[58] Palermo's ambiguous notes suggest that he started out either by freeing himself from Beuys through non-Beuysian shapes (like the oval disk) or by gaining the freedom of using found forms (like the materials for the disk) inspired by Beuys, and that his work ultimately developed toward an even greater sense of possibilities by means of color. Palermo's triptych for and about Beuys, then, presents both the course of the student's departure from his teacher's work and an exploration of the possibilities Beuys offered, a departure and exploration that, in Palermo's mind, was still "unfinished" and to be continued in 1976. This is no longer the departure from within Beuysian paradigms seen in the staff objects but rather a move into new territory.[59] In light of Beuys's pedagogical beliefs and practices, it is a separation that Beuys must have strongly encouraged. Palermo in turn appreciated that encouragement, as suggested by his inscription "Für J. Beuys" and his retrospective statement that Beuys "showed me the way to myself and to my possibilities."[60]

ROMANTIC STAFFS AND PLANES

One of Palermo's signature motifs among the objects —a vertical or T element paired with a planar one— emerged from the reconfiguration of his most evidently borrowed motif, the Beuysian staff. If we examine the first and best known of these—*Tagtraum II (Nachtstück)* (Daydream II [Nightpiece]), 1966— in conjunction with a closely related work on paper made the following year, we can see the object engaging in an explicit dialogue with German Romanticism (figs. 23, 24).[61] Palermo inscribed the watercolor at the top with the title/dedication *Hymne an die Nacht/für/Novalis/Ursula/Henning* (Hymn to the Night/for/Novalis/Ursula/Henning) and at the bottom with his signature and the message "Palermo/Kopenhagen/Gute Nacht." The title borrows from the 1800 *Hymnen an die Nacht* by the young German poet and philosopher Novalis (the pseudonym of Friedrich von Hardenberg), and the young German painter adds a dedication to Novalis and to two friends, the composer Henning Christiansen, with

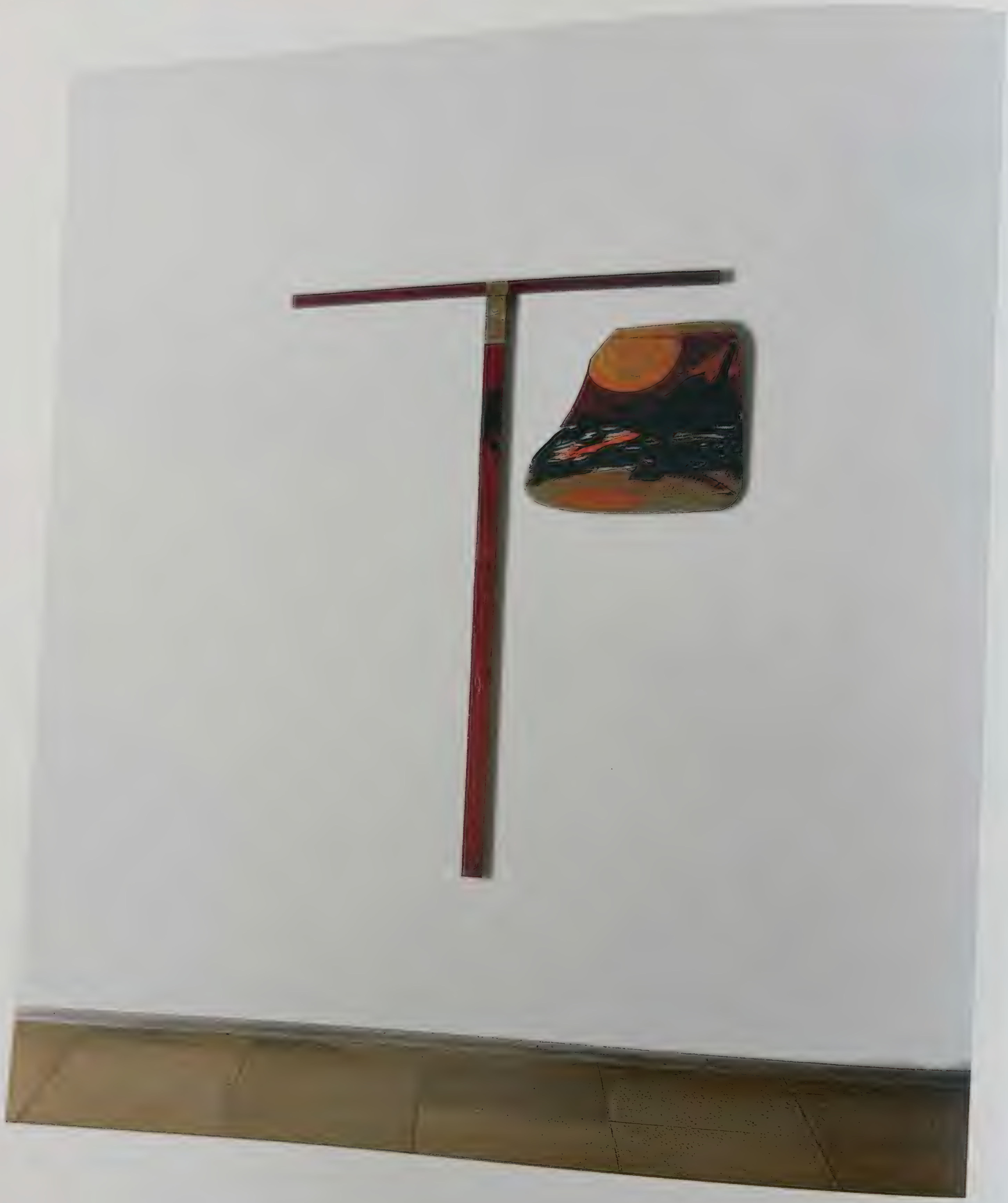


Fig. 24 *Tagtraum II (Nachtstück)* (Daydream II [Nightpiece]) (*Wvz* 40), 1966. Casein on artificial silk over wood, 168 x 125 x 3.5 cm. Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.

whom Palermo would soon collaborate, and his artist wife, Ursula Reuter, who had also studied with Beuys. Palermo reportedly slipped the drawing under their bedroom door during his stay with them in Copenhagen for a 1967 exhibition that Christiansen had arranged for Palermo and his friends. As Reuter recalls, "I read again (March 1967) Heinrich von Ofterdingen. I made many drawings. All 'Hymns to the Night.' Made four sculptures, all of the same title. Palermo had never heard of Novalis, nor had he ever read 'Hymns to the Night.' We talked a lot about these works. . . . When he was in Copenhagen, he gave us the small drawing as a thank you."[62] Christiansen took Palermo's lead and the following year, in one of the earliest essays published on Palermo, in the Danish magazine *Hvedekorn*, described his work as poetic and as following a Romantic example, thus laying the first public claim to Palermo's Romanticism. Other writers, and to some degree Palermo himself, followed.[63]

The 1994 exhibition *The Romantic Spirit in German Art* staged a narrative of Romanticism continuing far into contemporary times. In the catalogue Michael Semff argues that Palermo's watercolor *Hymne an die Nacht* evokes "a number of associations that are crucial to the texture of [Novalis's] poem," and by implication to German Romanticism: "a proximity to nature," an "open association and rapprochement of divergent parts," and a "mysterious, metaphysical dream state." Was Palermo a belated Romantic painter in the grand German tradition? Perhaps when it comes to the objects, but their development shows rather that over the course of close to ten years, Palermo shed Romantic clichés in favor of a more nuanced if still probably intuitive understanding of German Romanticism.[64]

Palermo's early interest in nature, which Romantic artists transformed into a legitimate theme in its own right, is undeniable, and certain motifs in *Tagtraum II* seem to bear this out: its "cloud-like shape strongly [suggestive of] spatial, landscape-like depth" and the "notched, opaque circle [that] looms into the 'picture' out of the 'sky,' like the face of a moon."[65] Yet we do well to situate the fragment of a circle in *Tagtraum II*—so reminiscent of a sun or moon by virtue of its yellow-orange color and placement at the upper edge of the plane—in relation to its return in a later untitled object of 1972, where it has lost its mimetic power (fig. 25). Colored black and featured not once but twice, it now approaches a pattern and bears little resemblance to either sun or moon. In fact, that sense of artifice seeps into Palermo's "nature" early on, most obviously in the 1966 object entitled *Landschaft* (Landscape) (fig. 26).[66] Its explicit references to nature—the title and a horizon separating a field from a sky above—are infiltrated by a most unnatural patch of blue imitating wood grain set into a slightly too brilliant green area. Likewise, in the cloth pictures starting around the same time, Palermo plays with landscape connotations, but only to court popular taste. (Knoebel

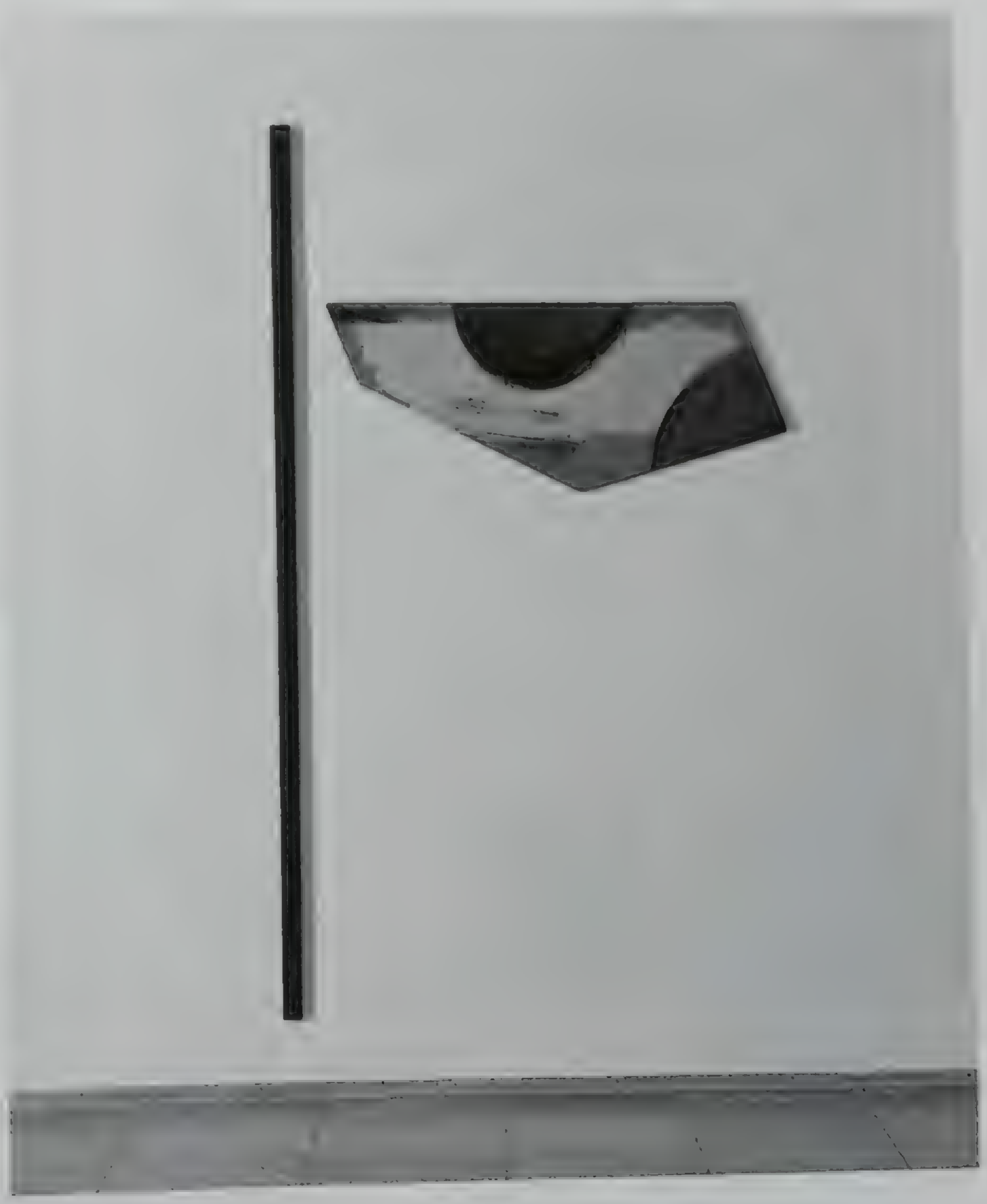
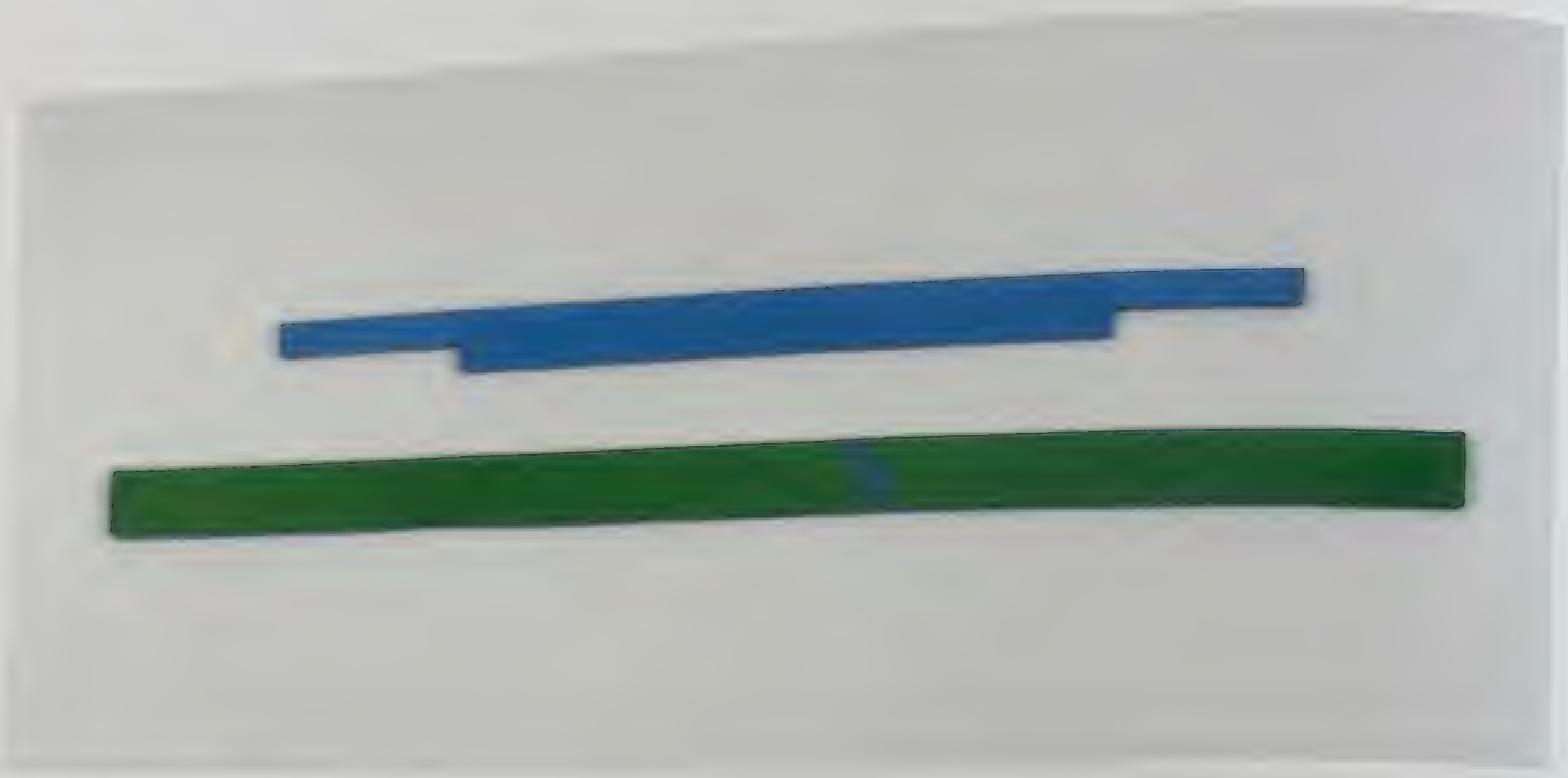


Fig. 25 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 153), 1972. Casein on Nessel over wood and pressboard, part 1: 247.8 x 5.5 x 2.5 cm; part 2: 53.5 x 135 x 2.5 cm. Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.



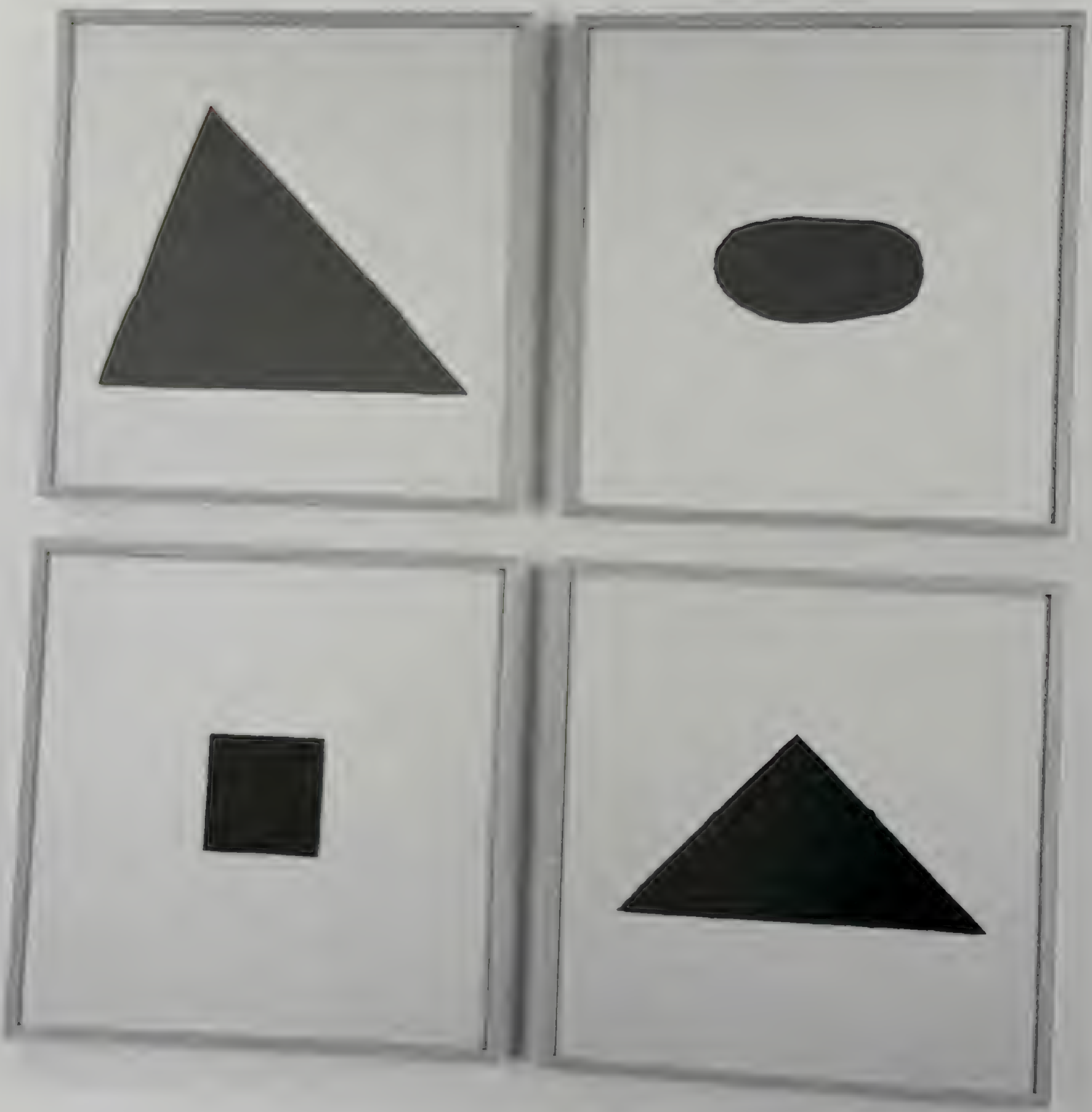


Fig. 26 *Landschaft* (Landscape) (*Wvz* 38), 1966. Oil on Nessel over wood, top: 9 x 149 x 2.5 cm; bottom: 10 x 200 x 2.5 cm. Private collection.

Fig. 27 *4 Prototypen* (4 Prototypes), 1970. Number 47 of an edition of 90 + 12 A. P. Four silkscreens on Bristolboard, each 60 x 60 cm.

remembered peers at the Düsseldorf academy jokingly teasing Palermo for being "nothing but a landscape painter").[67] And in later metal pictures preoccupied with times of day and ordinal directions the signs for nature are located farther and farther away from their referents. In the early 1970s Palermo recounted to Gislind Nabakowski, a former Beuys student turned art critic, a key experience he had while visiting the American West—the feeling of being able "to step close to nature, to step far away from nature, and to stand in the middle of nature." But the connection to Palermo's art is far from self-evident, since the widely cited quotation, as Nabakowski herself informs readers, described Palermo's impressions of a lake—an artificial one, no less.[68]

Palermo's engagement with Romanticism may be substantiated more persuasively through his use of the fragment, a concept that played a central role in the German Frühromantik as it emerged between 1798 and 1800 in the so-called Jena circle, which included Novalis and had formed around the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel and their journal *Athenaeum*. Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, in particular, made the fragment a central genre for their philosophical, scientific, and literary writings. Their choice stemmed from the belief that the subject, contrary to Enlightenment tenets, could no longer be conceived of as whole or fully understood; knowledge and meaning would always remain incomplete.[69] These philosophical implications run precisely counter to the clichés of Romanticism that celebrated subjectivity and self-expression, widespread in Germany after World War II.

It is this "Jena meaning" that Palermo took, if anything, from his reading of Novalis, whereas Romantic readings of Palermo's work have treated the fragment only in a limited, quasi-iconographic way. Thus in Semff's take Palermo's drawing for Novalis and the related object share an "open association and rapprochement of divergent parts in a spirit of lyrical dialogue," embodied in the contrast of strict axial geometry and amorphous, colored form.[70] Yet in the object Palermo positions the planar shape to accentuate its fragmentary nature, for the edge closest to the complete T shape is dramatically irregular. There are other such clashes—solid T-member with flat plane, plain confident presence with cumbersome painting and damaged shape—but the parts also relate to each other. The T shape seems to embrace the planar shape, for both are made of the same materials and palette of earth tones, with the black brushwork on the plane seeming to continue across the gap of the white wall onto the neighboring area of the staff.

Palermo's interest in the fragment feeds into his predilection for creating objects from found materials: woods that bear the signs of previous use (the twisted bar in *Blaue Scheibe mit Stab*), the omnipresent visible underpainting, and the many rusty staples and nails scattered about. Not surprisingly one visitor to Palermo's studio was "flabbergasted at the 'curios,' the heaps of metal trash."[71] With their original significances lost, Palermo's tired materials leave an impression of lack that is further accentuated by his often haphazard process of making and ties into the unevenness and small scale pervasive among the objects. Palermo's turn to small, one-part objects probably resulted from the size contrasts in two-part objects like *Tagtraum II*, especially because this work was the first in which he made the white expanse of the wall integral to the object in order to underscore its fragmentary nature.[72]

The irregular outline of the plane in *Tagtraum II* notably reappears on a smaller scale in subsequent objects with notches, dents, crooks, and the like shrunken and multiplied—for example, in *Schmetterling I* and *Graue Scheibe*, in which Palermo kept the irregular outline exactly as he found it.[73] In the 1970 silkscreen portfolio *4 Prototypen*, Palermo combines irregularity with the remnants of geometric forms—a blue triangle, a gray disk, a small black square, and a green scalene triangle, all with uneven edges created by Palermo's use of an excessive amount of ink (fig. 27). The "prototypes" thus form a basis for Palermo's art, as it were, departing as they do from the confines of accurate geometry and resonant with Novalis's celebration of the "crooked line" as the "victory of free nature over the rule."[74]

Yet Palermo complicates the Romantic fragment: eight two-part objects follow *Tagtraum II* at intermittent points until as late as 1974. While the fragment's hermeneutic significance begins to inform his other bodies of works, its clichéd incarnation is gradually abandoned. Palermo experimented with different ways of developing parts into separate autonomous entities, a radical shift marked already by *Blaue Scheibe und Stab,* the first two-part object to follow *Tagtraum II.*[75] Although the blue tape ties staff and plane together, both assert their independence: the staff is twisted, as if turning away and into itself; the plane now comes in the form of a circle, the most self-contained geometric shape.[76] With *White Wing*, the last object of the two-part series, made during Palermo's time in New York, the different materials assert each member's integrity (fig. 28). The staff is made of roughly cut lumber stained dark brown; the trapezoidal aluminum plane is finished evenly with white acrylic paint and traversed by a subtly off-white, exactly vertical stripe. In their path toward separation, we perceive these two objects as different, but we also perceive them differently, for the strong presence of the rough wood appeals to our tactile sense whereas the barely visible white plane excites only visual curiosity. By 1974, when *White Wing* was made, Palermo had long succeeded in reconfiguring the notion of the fragment into something more profound than a mere fragmentary shape or group of shapes. In his cloth pictures, wall paintings, metal pictures, and collaborations with Gerhard Richter, open-ended meanings emerge from unresolved dualities, resistance to hermeticism, and the search for ways out of dead ends.

Expressionism played a large part in the readings of Palermo's objects as Romantic.[77] Semff detects in *Hymne an die Nacht* "those 'miraculous phenomena of expanded space,' those 'countless transformations,' those 'infinite eyes that Night has opened in us,' of which Novalis speaks," arguing that "it seems to

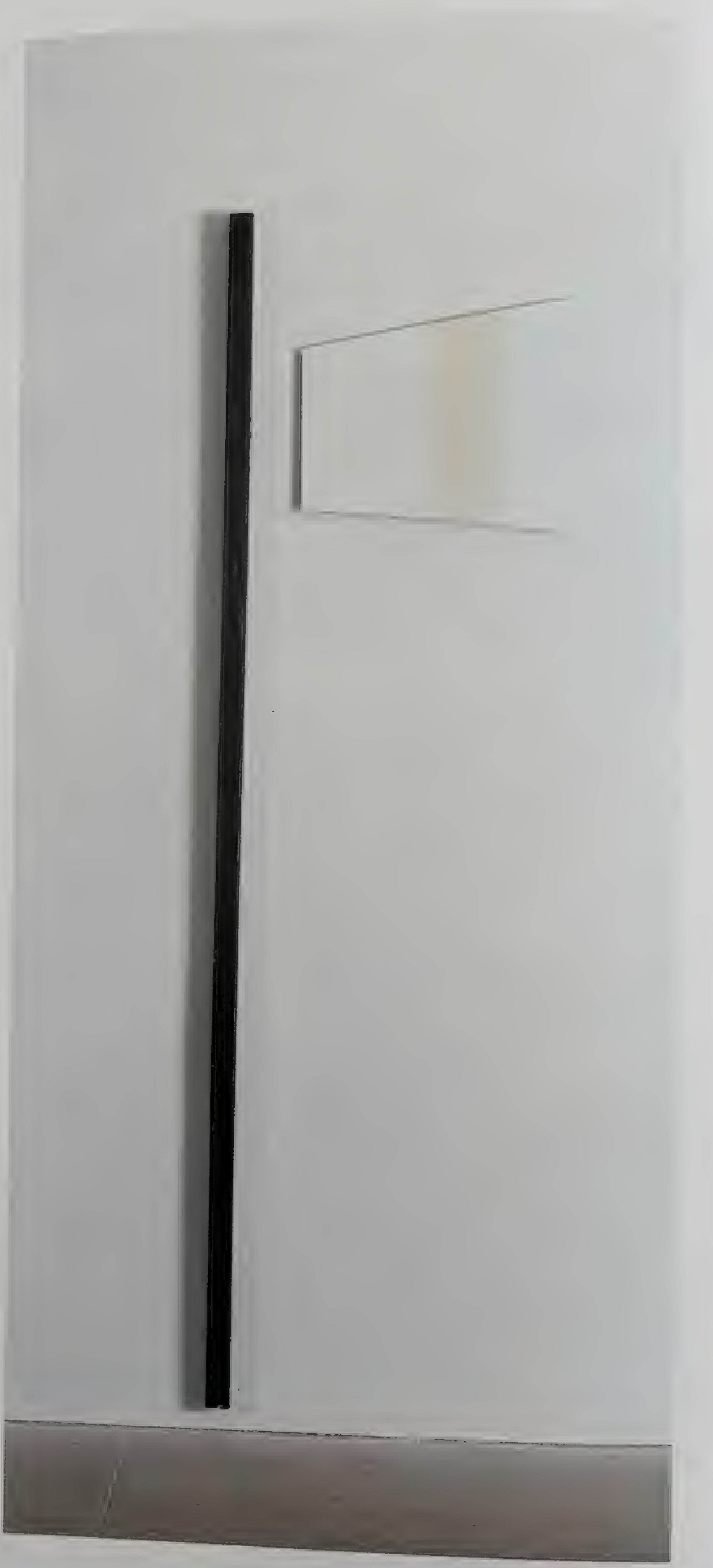


Fig. 28 *White Wing* (*Wvz* 173), 1974–75. Part 1: wood-protective paint on wood, 304.5 x 6.5 x 5.2 cm; part 2: acrylic on aluminum, 59.4 x 70.3 x 0.2 cm. Private collection.

capture the mysterious, metaphysical dream state in which 'the opposition of the realms of Night and Light is annulled'—a state that is also implicit in Palermo's title *Tagtraum*."[78] However, light and dark areas, whose opposition Semff regards as "annulled," appear clearly divided in the composition, and the work's purple and red oval shapes are only vaguely reminiscent of eyes. Granted, Novalis, in his posthumously published *Fragmente*, speaks of sleep as the temporary *inactivity* of the nerves and brain; he also links the eye to the emotions (*Gefühle*) in opposition to the understanding (*Verstand*).[79] With its sketchlike strokes and bleeding colors dissolving the recognizable motif, the watercolor, if anything, manifests a formal rather than a (strictly) iconographic interest in the means of achieving a subjective, emotional expression that Palermo, if not necessarily knowingly, may have shared with Novalis.

Semff further attributes the work's mood of "rapt inwardness" to the intimate circumstances of its having been made in the house of friends and refers to Palermo's "poetic" and "lyrical" qualities.[80] In this kind of Romantic reading based on subjective expression the poem or artwork becomes a source of the individual's imagination and a means of communicating emotion in its most direct form.[81] Surely Palermo produced *Tagtraum II* and other objects in rather idiosyncratic ways, say by wrapping wood in fabric, to reveal the irregularities of its manual making and lack of finish, and to suggest, in further keeping with expressionist paradigms, an anthropomorphic inner core sheltered by cloth.[82] The early Palermo works also contain brushwork—isolated strokes, the occasional dry brush scraping over wrinkled fabric, traces of individual brush hair, and layers of contrasting colors.

Nabakowski claims that the artist saw his "historical roots in abstract expressionism, which does not refer to the American movement, but to *Ausdrucksmalerei*." She quotes Palermo: "'Basic experiences came from expressionist painting—from *Ausdrucksmalerei*. How should one look at this painting? By seeing qualities of surface, form and color.'"[83] By giving priority to the less historically loaded term for "expression," *Ausdruck*, over the Latin-derived German term *Expressionismus*, and by carefully distinguishing his art from the clichés of self-expression then associated with American abstract expressionism in Germany and the United States alike, Palermo stressed the expressive potential of form more generally. That forms, materials, and colors can have references far beyond the artist's self becomes clear in Palermo's other work groups. As these develop over the years, expressive brushwork and traces of manual labor vanish from the objects that were made at the same time. Strokes are contained on regular three-dimensional supports; they turn vacuous, staged in broad sweeps and isolated areas (see fig. 25); monochrome areas become even (see fig. 28). The gestural strokes of *Tagtraum II*, for example, appear stiff and mechanical, at best awkward; its circle seems to have been hastily filled in, the black lines below it are monotonously worked back and forth, and those on the staff are confined to a repetitive pattern. It is a brushwork that bears the seeds of its own ruin.[84]

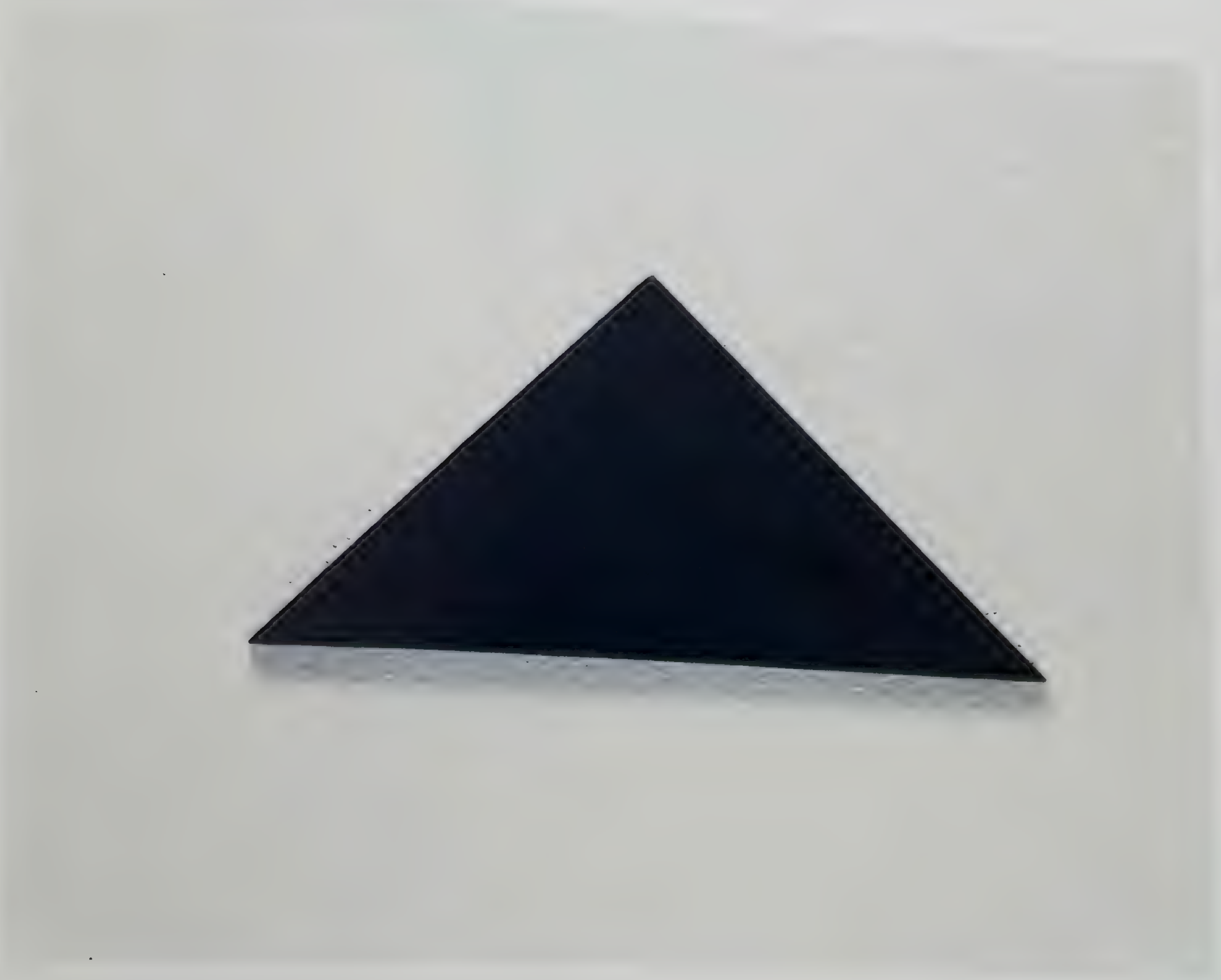
TRIANGLES, CLOUDS, AND THE SPIRITUAL IN ART

The spiritual (*das Geistige*) in abstract art forms another nexus of meanings in the literature about Palermo's objects: it is used to describe various vaguely defined realms of a world beyond the artwork's material form. Echoing G. W. F. Hegel's conception of *Geist* in his 1807 *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Phenomenology of Spirit), the term is often used to refer to the realm of the mind, of ideas, the ideal, and "the absolute," all of which are dialectically interwoven with the realm of materiality even as they strive to transcend it.[85] Other writings on Palermo, by contrast, use "the spiritual" to reference the irrational and the mysterious, even the religious.[86]

Schwenk persuasively explores the spiritual elements in Palermo's art in his extensive work on the artist. "Palermo transcends his picture-objects in order to build a spiritual world," Schwenk writes,

effecting an “experience of transcendence,” at times “religious feeling.” The objects suggest a “magic mysteriousness,” border on the “irrational,” and form “parables of the unexplainable.” They are *überzeitlich* (outside time), “auratic,” and *entrückt* (at a distance from us).[87] The Romantic fragments that attract and repel one another imply a longing for wholeness, but their point of connection ultimately remains mysterious, so that “the work of art does not merely exist in its material constituents, but explicitly serves as a reference to something else that is not represented.”[88] Palermo likewise transforms “poor and worthless” materials into art; he “heals” and moves them from their profane origin into a realm that lies at an auratic distance outside of time. The careful placement of an object on a pure white wall enlarges this sense of distance, turning the room into a “sacral space.”[89] Palermo’s colors are “transubstantiated” rather than bound to the material.[90] Moreover, Palermo makes use of the spiritual meanings that certain forms have accumulated over the course of history.[91] Placing a blue triangle over a door, as Palermo did in several works, suggests not so much a coat of arms or a gable as an “architectonic, national emblem of crowning. Also Christian meanings, such as the symbolic representation of the trinity or the eye of God, are connoted. Basically, [the triangle] marks and spiritualizes the moments of entering and leaving a room, endowing the person walking through with nobility.”[92] In addition to these historical connotations, the triangle alludes to the work of early abstract artists, in whom Palermo expressed an early interest, who favored geometric shapes because they were radically removed from the world and its representation.[93]

Palermo’s most significant objects engage with the spiritual only to return to the material. These are the triangles, the gray disk, and other small objects, which Palermo apparently considered of special importance since the triangle and disk, at least, reappear unaltered in a number of prints, editions, and a retrospective work (figs. 29, 30). The artist’s



opposite
Fig. 29 *Graue Scheibe* (Gray Disk) (*Wvz* 42), 1966. Casein on Nessel over wood, 13.5 x 26.5 x 2.5 cm. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Fig. 30 *Blaues Dreieck* (Blue Triangle) (*Wvz* 43), 1966. Casein on Nessel over wood, 32 x 45.6 x 32.7 cm. Private collection.

favorite shape by far was the triangle. He initially used an isosceles triangle in a series of objects and wall paintings (see figs. 1, 30, 33, 34), as well as in a group of prints (see fig. 60).[94] While preferring an even, symmetrical triangle, he nevertheless insisted on the slight irregularities of surface and edges that are prominent in *4 Prototypen*, resulting from his habits of imprecision and manual making, his thick paint application, and the leaking of paint from under stencils, ruler edges, or printing presses.[95] Palermo's "messiness," which stresses the materiality of the objects and ties them firmly to the world, was calculated. In the poster design for the 1966 Friedrich + Dahlem exhibition featuring his blue triangle, the artist scribbled, "Leave irregularities."[96]

Palermo perfected his imperfections and pushed the irregularities farther; the later triangles become less even and less symmetrical. In two untitled black triangles made around the same time as the first blue one, the sides are already ever so slightly uneven in length, a change made more obvious in a subsequent green version. One later triangle has been stretched horizontally (fig. 31), while two others are turned so that their right angles are positioned at the bottom left and upper right corners, respectively. Another triangle has a corner cut off and is almost unrecognizable. It is as though Palermo has hacked at the spirit of abstract painting to pull his favorite triangle shape back into a world of specifics. Its idiosyncrasies are real.[97]

A triangle by definition is a shape that tapers in three directions, an impression that is most prevalent at the apexes of the isosceles triangles Palermo began to use in 1965, which suggest a process of dematerialization. This is why the form figures prominently in Wassily Kandinsky's theories of the spiritual in abstract art, especially his diagram of spiritual life in the world: at the top, "we find professional intellectuals who examine matter over and over again and finally cast doubt upon matter itself."[98] Palermo's triangles move farther and farther from the symmetrically placed tapering top and

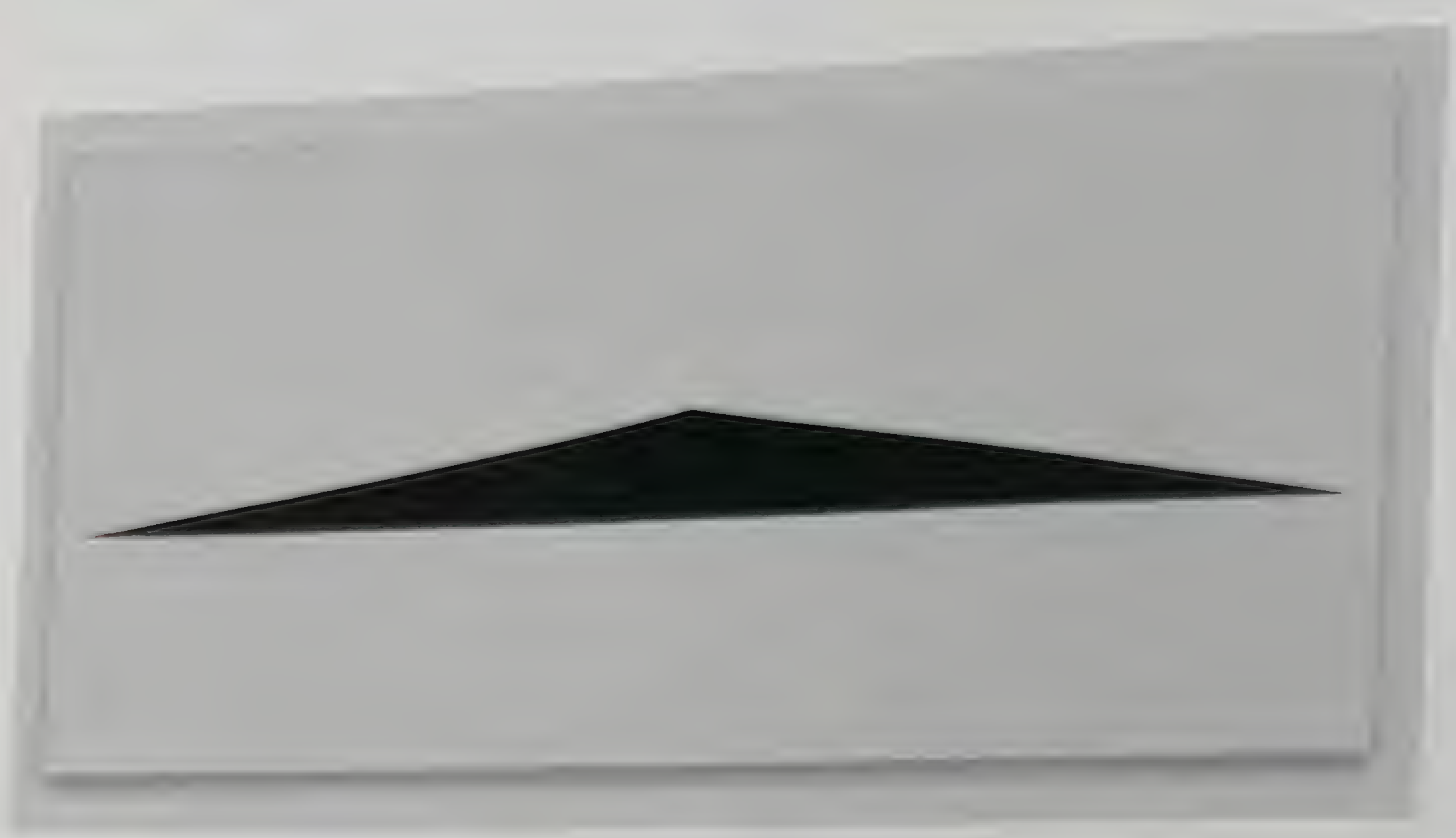
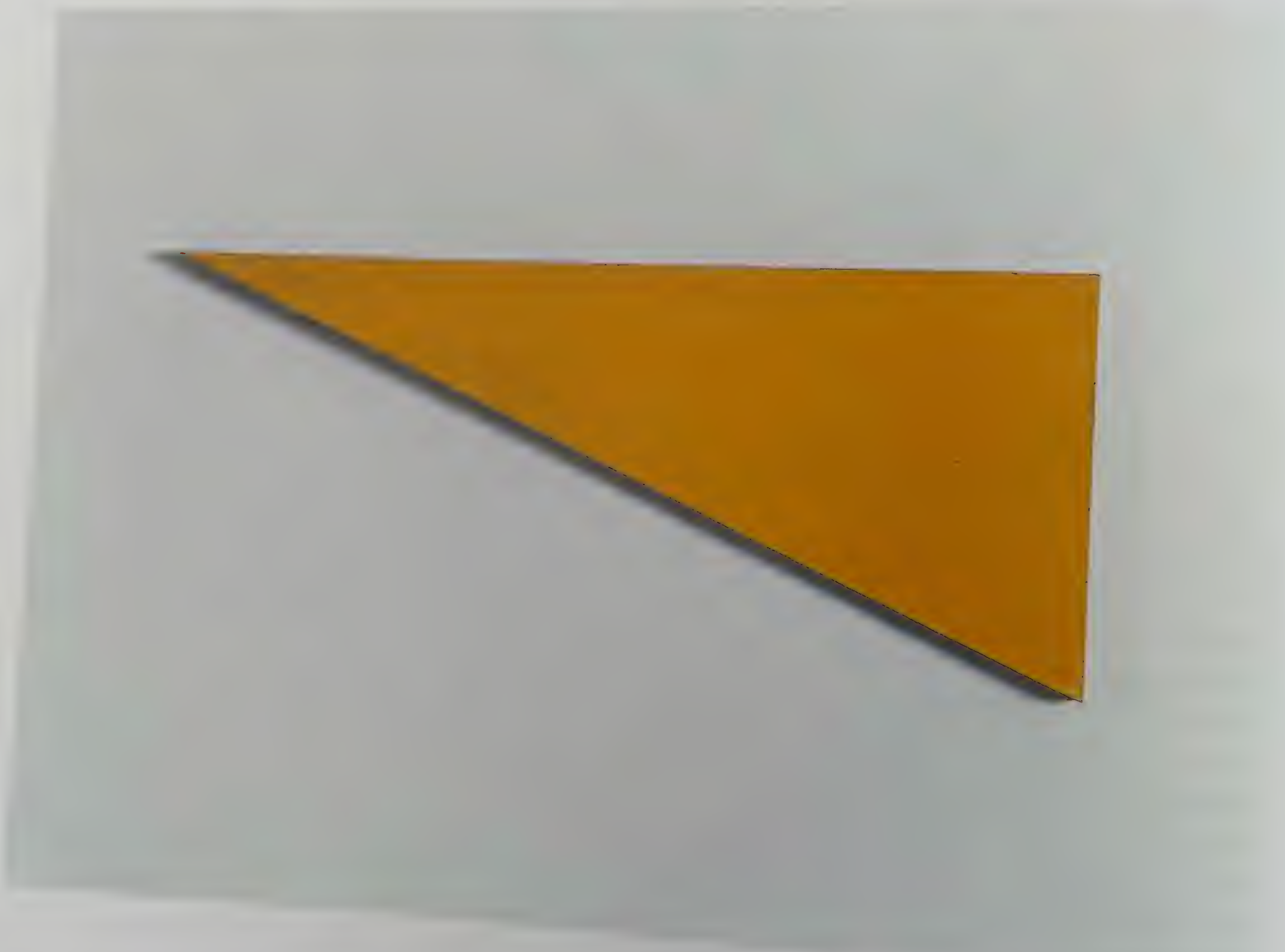


Fig. 31 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 87), 1968. Oil, black chalk, and pencil on canvas, 45.1 x 95.3 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of UBS.

Fig. 32 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 170), c. 1974. Oil on plywood, 56.3 x 61.4 x 24.6 x 1.8 cm. Private collection.



thus away from the spiritual toward the material. This is especially true in the 1974 yellow triangle, whose horizontal top weighs the object down (fig. 32). This is also true, if for a different reason, in the earlier horizontally stretched out triangle that comes not in object format but painted on a conventional rectangular canvas. There our eyes are inevitably drawn to the bottom edge, which by a trick of the eye appears to be bulging out slightly. Far from dematerializing, this triangle swells.

Triangles made of mirrored glass seem similarly unspiritual, and on two occasions they are juxtaposed with a painted triangle of the same size and shape—in an untitled object of 1969 (see fig. 1) and an untitled editioned object dedicated to the musician Thelonious Monk.[99] A mirror dematerializes everything it reflects into an ephemeral image, but the transformation is too literal and too commonplace to be considered a transcendence, as implied by one critic's facetious suggestion that Palermo's object could be used to fix one's hair.[100] Viewers discovering their reflection in a work of art, moreover, are likely to be jolted out of whatever experience of transcendence they might have had. Palermo's mirror triangles surprise us with our own presence: in this world, in this room, in this work of art. The three small changes Palermo made to the object before it was produced as an editioned work are significant. In the later version, the two triangles are flipped upside down, blocking any visual or Kandinskyan spiritual movement upward. Palermo also changed the color of the mirror's neighbor from blue to black and made the piece in a multiple edition (of thirty) rather than as a unique object. Similar changes occur, if in a different form, in Palermo's other triangle objects.

The most prominent color in Palermo's early triangles—whether in object form, painted, or printed—is a clear (occasionally darkish) ultramarine blue. This blue ties back to Palermo's interest in Romanticism, for the color became an emblem of German Romanticism and wildly fashionable among its followers after the publication of Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, whose hero engages in a symbolic search for a blue flower, and of Goethe's *Werther*, whose title character wore a blue frock coat.[101] More immediately pertinent to the question of the spiritual in Palermo's objects is Kandinsky's book *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (On the Spiritual in Art), first published in December 1911 and republished in West Germany in 1952. Blue there is linked to the infinite: "The inclination of blue toward depth is so great that it becomes more intense the darker the tone, and has a more characteristic inner effect. The deeper the blue becomes, the more strongly it calls man toward the infinite, awakening in him a desire for the pure and, finally, for the supernatural. It is the color of the heavens. . . . Blue unfolds in its lowest depths the element of tranquility. As it deepens toward black, it assumes overtones of superhuman sorrow. It becomes like an infinite self-absorption into that profound state of seriousness, which has, and can have, no end."[102] Kandinsky's work enjoyed tremendous popularity in the years after World War II, and the reference was probably on Palermo's mind, as can be seen by his combination, consistent with Kandinsky's theories, of the shape of the triangle and the color blue.

During his visit to Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, Palermo had probably also seen Kasimir Malevich's *Suprematist Painting: Black Rectangle, Blue Triangle*, a work that may be intended as a comment on Kandinsky's theories.[103] Blue, though of a slightly brighter and more radiant quality, was also the color notoriously identified with Yves Klein, an artist familiar to the postwar German art world through his exhibitions in Düsseldorf and Krefeld, his close connection to Zero, and his marriage to Uecker's sister. The artist's trademark International Klein Blue, or IKB, played a key role in the rhetorical propagation in his writings of the infinite and the absolute, the spiritual and the immaterial, leaving aside whether his motivations were serious or ironic.[104] Perhaps Palermo learned from Klein's ambivalence. Starting with his first blue triangle object in 1966, Palermo used the color-shape combination frequently until 1969. At the same time that he started creating less regular, more matter-based triangles and used bright colors in the cloth pictures, he began to bring in other colors to join and replace the spiritual blue—a bright green, a warm yellow, and an orange-red. Palermo's palette became too colorful and intense, too quirky and lighthearted, to transport either eye or mind anywhere beyond the here and now.[105]

Palermo challenged the spiritual heritage of the color blue while nevertheless using it for his objects. Some of his means are familiar: cheap paint like Plakafarbe (a common children's paint) for certain prints, crude paint applications and irregular edges, and juxtapositions with mirrors. Palermo's incessant use of multiple blue triangles—both within his oeuvre and within individual works—similarly counteracts the possibility of auratic effect or transcendent experience. The blue triangle effectively became Palermo's signature, a trademark tied to an actual person and thus removed even farther from transpersonal realms, as its use in a 1968 portrait of Palermo by Sigmar Polke and as a restaurant name and logo in Palermo's native Leipzig make amusingly clear.[106] Not coincidentally, one would think, Palermo's first venture into the reproductive print medium in 1966 contains a blue triangle, although the exact number of editions of *Blaues Dreieck* of 1966, a silkscreen made for a traveling exhibition of German prints, and of *Blaues Dreieck* of 1969, made of chipboard painted with Plakafarbe, are unknown. Another blue triangle edition, a do-it-yourself kit for painting a blue triangle over a door, is based on the principle of infinite multiplication: owners are instructed to produce several versions based on a stencil (see fig. 60).[107]

Palermo built on the idea of the blue triangle as part of a pair—for example, in the mirror object—when he made a wall painting using blue triangles in a series that was installed at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels for a 1970 group exhibition with Richter and Uecker (fig. 33).[108] Palermo described the work as "a row of blue triangles painted on the wall (each 24 × 36 cm) at a distance of 138 cm at the same height without interruption across all walls of the room," painted "with the help of a stencil." Judging from numerous photographs, the height from the floor appears to be roughly two meters.[109] Distributed evenly on the wall without regard for architectural details, the triangles sometimes end up in awkward places—on the top left corner of a door, across one of the six corners of the room.[110] Their placement just above the average visitor's height and the optical illusion they give of dark shapes sitting on a light background create the effect of objects hovering in space. Their weight-defying parade comically literalizes the immaterial legacy of the blue triangle, while their distribution evenly around the room parallel to both the floorboards and molding pushes them close to a decorative pattern, a domain most alien to the spiritual.

Palermo's decorative use of the triangle over a door—his preferred placement for the blue (and black) versions—clearly references a pediment (fig. 34).[111] Schwenk argues that the placement of an object over a door evokes ritual, Christian, and spiritual meanings, but the more familiar pediment is far likelier to come to viewers' minds. That very decorative placement of the blue triangle in fact undermines its spiritual potential, instead inserting it into the commonplace realms of domestic architecture and neoclassical ornament. The triangle also provokes mild amusement because the pediment has been reduced to miniature proportions, completely out of sync with the scale of either the door or the entering body.

Humor is one of Palermo's strongest tools in his handling and dismantling of the spiritual in abstract art, both in the triangles and in several other objects made of single components. But the objects never seem to raise a laugh among the critical reviewers—not even a chuckle. Oddly enough Robert Smithson in 1966 related the chuckle to the triangle in his lexicon of Generalized Laughter: "The ordinary laugh is cubic or square (Isometric), the chuckle is a triangle or pyramid (Tetragonal), the giggle is a

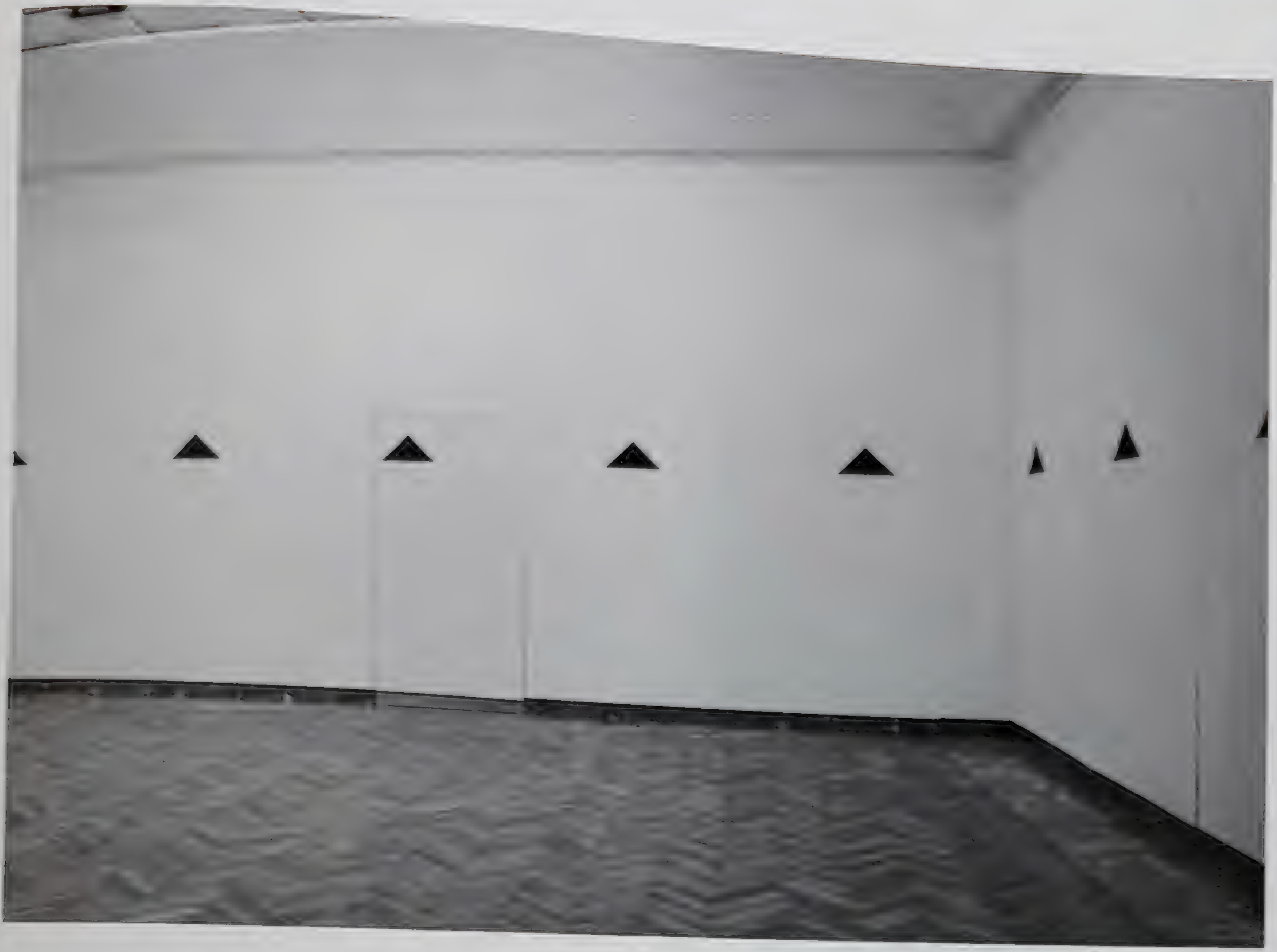


Fig. 33 *Blaue Dreiecke* (Blue Triangles), Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, for the exhibition *Gerhard Richter, Günther Uecker, Palermo,* 13 February–1 March 1970. Casein on walls, room: 1,000 (max.) x 1,200 (max.) x 416 cm; triangles: c. 24 x 36 x c. 24 cm.

hexagon or rhomboid (Hexagonal), the titter is prismatic (Orthorhomboid), the snicker is oblique (Monoclinic), the guffaw is asymmetric (Triclinic)." Smithson conceives of laughter as "entropic 'verbalization,'" a kind of utterance that expresses our inability to conceptualize the lack of fit between pure and impure, order and disorder.[112] Smithson's embrace of the limits of human understanding is similar to that of the Jena circle; it does not turn to the irrational or spiritual as an explanation of what remains unresolvable. Hence it is not surprising to find that Novalis, not unlike Smithson, defines *Witz* (meaning both "wit" and "joke") as inherently creative because it creates similarities between contrasts.[113] Precisely because it defies conceptualization, laughter is complicated, but it often relates to contrast, exaggeration, and inversion, and specifically to the breaking of rules or norms and the meeting of rigidity with elasticity, the mechanical with the human.[114]

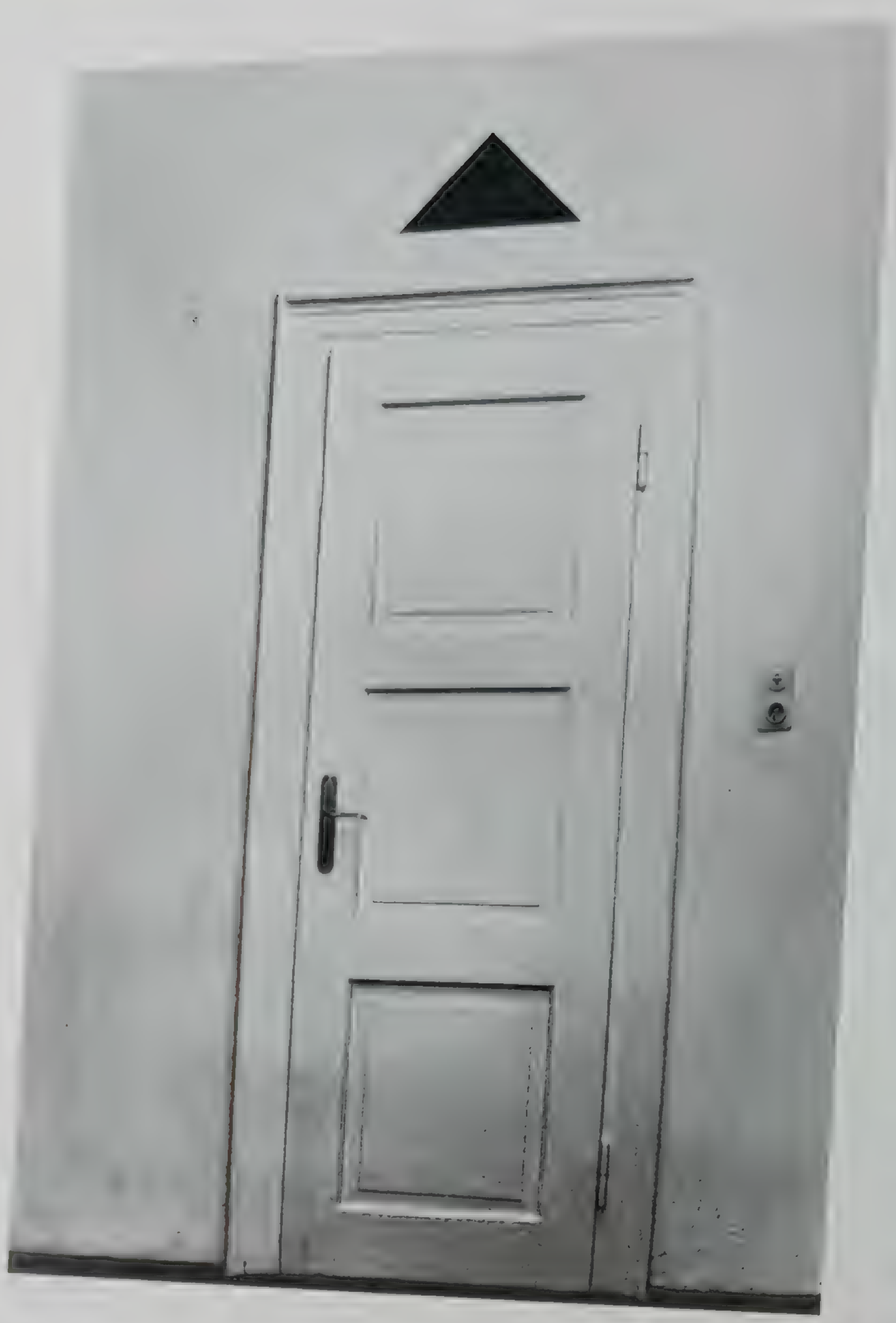


Fig. 34 *Dreieck über einer Tür* (Triangle Above a Door), apartment of Six Friedrich, Munich, 1971. Paint on wall, triangle: 23 x 46 x 23 cm.

It is Palermo's cheeky play with shapes derived from geometry and his literalized renderings of dematerialization that make me, at least, chuckle. Palermo lightheartedly dresses his triangles in intense colors that, far from the primaries, defy categorization; he gives his objects uneven edges and surfaces; he turns them into decoration. Of crucial importance here is their small scale, for Palermo disrespectfully reduces authoritative forms like triangles, ellipses, rectangles, and squares to miniatures (fig. 35). Closely related and similarly amusing is another contrast, which the art historian Briony Fer has identified as central to Palermo's objects, between "an inconspicuous thing or shape" (created by its small size) and a "highly conspicuous color."[115] The small scale also literalizes in the most blatant manner notions of the spiritual and immaterial, comparable to the tapering apex of the triangle and the floating shapes in the triangle wall painting.

The material presence of Palermo's objects—most important, that of his other signature object, *Graue Scheibe*, made from a heavily deformed, planar ellipse —dwindles farther when they are mounted on invis-

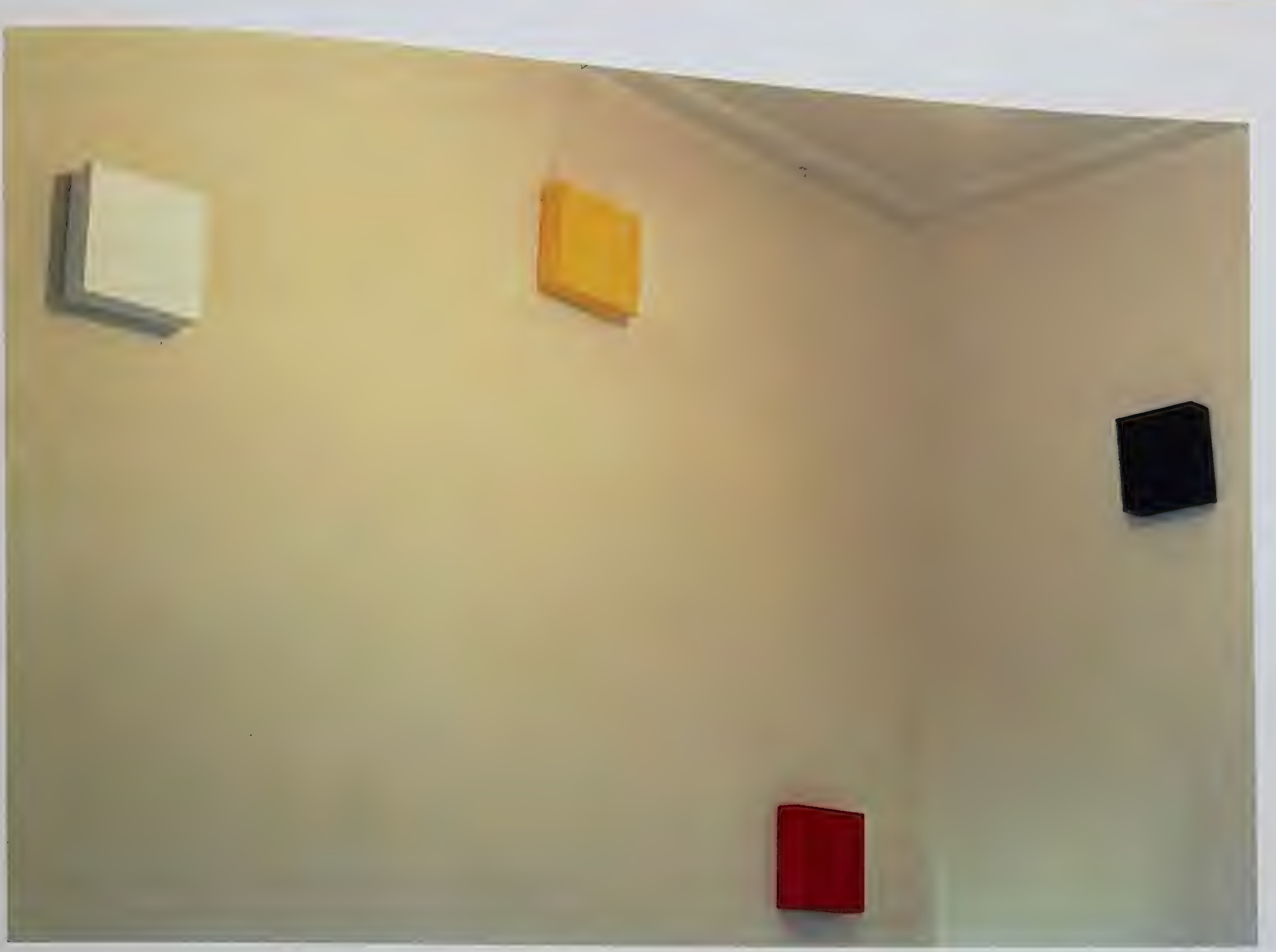


Fig. 35 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 128), 1970.
Oil on canvas over wood,
four parts, each 15 x 15 x 5 cm.
Private collection.

ible supports that stick out from an open expanse of white wall, making them appear to be hovering there.[116] With its irregular outline, slightly asymmetrical shape, and installation high on the wall, *Graue Scheibe*, like three similarly shaped objects from 1970, seems reminiscent of a cloud; indeed, Palermo and his friends apparently referred to it jokingly as a *graue Wolke*, "gray cloud." In fact, a high school friend, Herbert Nolte, described a joke played on Palermo by his friends, including Richter and Tadeusz, while the artist was installing *Graue Scheibe* for an important visit by the collector Karl Ströher. "When he [Palermo] happened to be away, they took down the cloud. And they had these hydraulic elevators to arrange their paintings, and they hung it up three meters high on the wall. And then [when he returned] they drove him all the way up to the ceiling of the hall with this hydraulic thing and let him wriggle there."[117] With the spiritual aspect pushed toward a literal, childlike representation of the sky, we join Palermo and his friends in having a good laugh at the absorption of abstract artists in the spiritual realm.

THE GERMAN WAY OF PAINTING

Some of Palermo's objects interweave the full spectrum of the cultural references we have been exploring in this chapter—the art of Beuys, German Romanticism, expressionism, and the spiritual—through a combination of features, such as irregular outlines or the color blue. The most important of these is an untitled object now in the collection of the Dia Art Foundation (fig. 36).[118] Palermo revisited it at least once three years after he first made it: notes and a sketch on the verso reveal that he corrected the original date of 1964 to 1967 and abandoned his original idea of juxtaposing it with a square-shaped object.[119] Palermo cared about this unusual work: an orange vertical staff just over two meters in length that supports five slightly irregular white rectangles of different sizes, each painted with the fragment of an upward-facing blue triangle. The Beuysian staff, the Romantic fragment, and the signature triangle meet to form a manifesto-like work in which Palermo appropriates and joins the major components of his objects. The artist here too challenged his beginnings by familiar means: the staff as the ground for painting (now for attaching a set of mini-paintings), conspicuous color, chopped-off triangles, irregularities of manual making, seriality, and the like.

Why did Palermo take on Beuys, Romanticism, expressionism, and the spiritual all together here, and again and again over the ten years he was making objects? For Palermo, what was at stake was nothing less than the status of German art—its definition, legacy, and prospect—for these traditions, mediated by Beuys and other contemporary artists, formed the pillars of modern art in Germany. In his series of essays entitled "German Art: A New Generation" dating from the late 1960s and early 1970s, the critic Rolf-Gunter Dienst lamented that expressionism had come to define the international image of German art.[120] In a political and cultural climate eager to reconnect with the country's prefascist past, expressionists dominated the first Documenta exhibition in 1955, a landmark in the formation of the post–National Socialist German art world. At the same time, expressionist painting experienced a revival among young abstract painters. The four artists of the Quadriga group—K. O. Götz, Otto Greis, Heinz Kreutz, and Bernhard Schultze—made their debut on the German art scene in 1952 with the exhibition *Neo-Expressionisten* at the Zimmergalerie Franke in Frankfurt, showing large-scale abstract paintings filled with demonstrative brushwork and theatrical gestures.[121] Later, Informel or Tachist painting, originally developed in Paris by German expatriates Wols and Hans Hartung among others, became popular in Germany; it was exhibited, for example, at Documenta 2 in 1959, and it was quickly institutionalized: marketed by important dealers like Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, collected by major museums, and taught at the leading academy (Götz and the Informel-inspired sculptor Gerhard Hoehme accepted teaching positions at the Düsseldorf

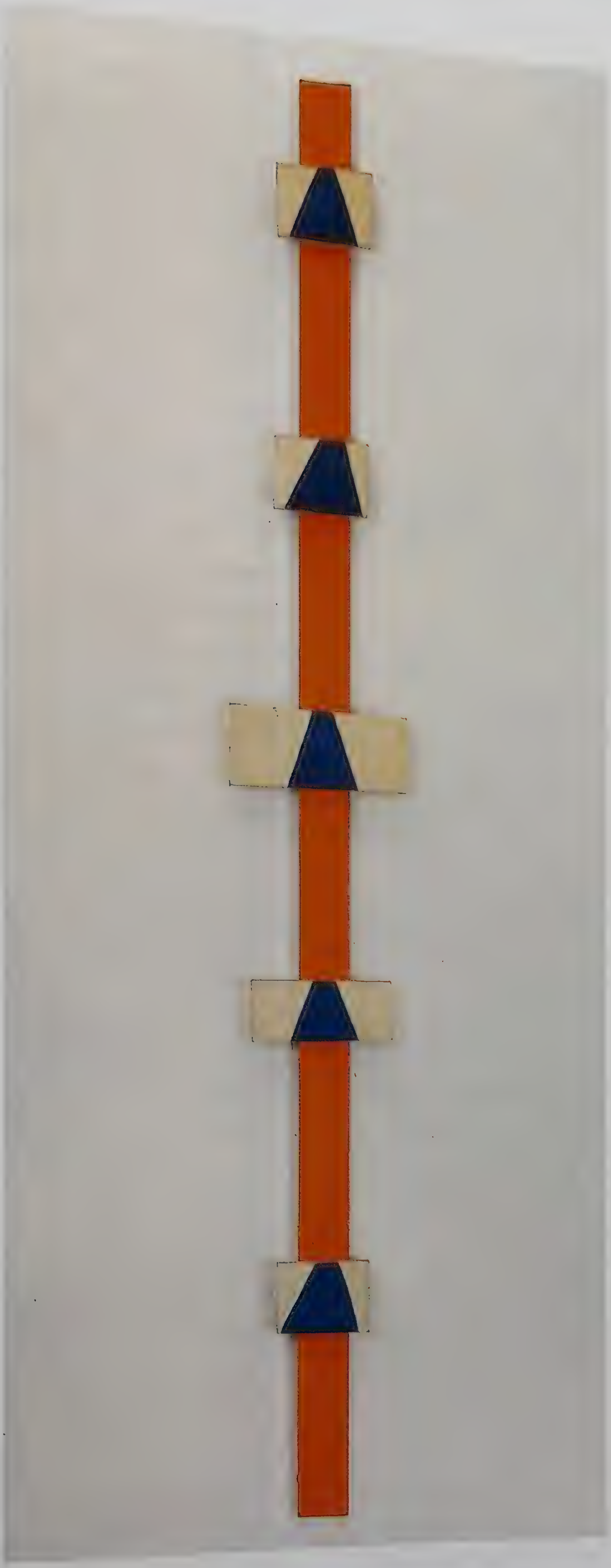


Fig. 36 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 50), 1964–67. Casein on Nessel over wood, 218.8 x 27.1 x 5.2 cm. Dia Art Foundation, New York.

academy in 1959 and 1960, respectively, and became the teachers of Richter and Polke).[122]

The term *spiritual*—along with words like *mystical* and *mysterious* and vaguely used philosophical terms such as *transcendent* and *idealist*—was widespread in postwar German art discourse. Dienst warned that "one could understand the Rhineland mysticism of Joseph Beuys and some of his followers as 'typically German,' yet that would be a stenciled reduction [*schablonistische Verkürzung*]."[123] But the spiritual was more pervasively linked to German art than even Dienst implied. Werner Haftmann, a leading historian of modern art during the first decades following the war, issued a call in 1953 for artists to turn for moral guidance to the "spiritual saints" Kandinsky and Paul Klee, and it was this more spiritual side of German expressionism that was most strongly represented at the first Documenta.[124] In a roundabout way, the Austrian art historian Hans Sedlmayr may have been the most prominent advocate of a spiritual turn in contemporary art. In his *Verlust der Mitte* (Lost Center), published in 1948, Sedlmayr lamented the loss of a center and of spiritual and religious expression in modern art, and in response contemporary thinkers and artists became even more vocal in stressing the spiritual basis of the abstract art being made in Germany.[125] This is particularly noticeable in the passionate exchanges at *Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit* (The Image of Man in Our Time), the July 1950 Darmstädter Gespräch, a three-day symposium involving anyone who was anyone in the still nascent postwar German art world, including, in addition to Sedlmayr, the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, the abstract painter Willi Baumeister, the former Bauhaus teacher Johannes Itten, the psychotherapist Alexander Mitscherlich, and the art historian Franz Roh.[126] Among artists, members of the influential Zen 49 group—including Baumeister, Theodor Werner, and Fritz Winter—led the way in celebrating the irrational, the absolute, the universal, and the transcendental in abstract painting. The core Zero artists—Mack, Piene, and Uecker—soon followed suit, calling, if occasionally in more ambivalent terms, for a "spiritualizing of our environment with light and movement" through an engagement with the immaterial, the transient, and the infinite. Yet another group, the so-called Neue Abstraktion (New Abstraction) painters of the 1960s—Gotthard Graubner, Rupprecht Geiger, and Reimer Jochims —were praised for their appeal to the transcendental and mystical sensibilities of human beings.[127]

Romanticism, at this time, was closely intertwined with, and even provided the origins for, the tenets of expressionism and the spiritual. To be sure, these terms were usually employed in a broad, even clichéd way; they were rarely informed by specifics or the nuances characteristic of the Frühromantik of the Jena circle. Haftmann sweepingly described his 1953 genealogy—from Jugendstil, Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and August Macke to the Bauhaus and on to the present—as "a completely legitimate development . . . that comes out of a specifically German spirit and has its roots in German Romanticism."[128] The weight of this lineage must have felt particularly oppressive to students at the Düsseldorf academy, a stronghold of German Romantic art in the nineteenth century: Informel, it was claimed, had its roots in Romanticism; Zero was about the "Romantic impulse to penetrate farther into the empty depth of sky"; the New Abstraction painters shared the interest of the Romantics in endlessness and boundlessness; and even pop landscapes could be presented as part of the Romantic legacy, as they were in the 1970 exhibition *Romantik? Landschaft von dazumal bis Pop* (Romanticism? Landscape from Then to Pop) in Cologne's Wallraf-Richartz Museum.[129]

These were the tropes that saturated Palermo's world after his move to Düsseldorf in 1964, the established reference points for a young artist. In the face of Germany's increasing isolation from an international art world more and more dominated by the United States, critics and artists defensively turned to what they saw as specifically German traits.[130] Yet for Palermo, as for many of his peers, this national tradition was the specter that haunted and halted German art, and his repeated, almost obsessive return to his objects was his reaction to, his pushing away of, that tradition. (Indeed, the repetition in and of itself enforced the distancing effect from the tradition.) Beginning to work through these trends as a student, Palermo returned to the objects over the next decade as a way to counteract these stultifying concepts until he had gradually turned them around. The objects fed his future work: with a rich vocabulary (found fabrics and colors, the incorporation of the supporting wall, the hovering plane), with a conceptual basis (unresolved dualities and open-ended meanings), and with a sense of motivation (ways out of dead-ended artistic practices). In that sense they functioned as Novalis's fragment had for the first Romantics: "Fragments . . . are literary seeds: certainly, there may be many sterile grains among them, but this is unimportant if only a few of them take root!"[131] As late as the mid-1970s, Palermo kept coming back to the traditions he had inherited, as if to keep measuring the distance he had come from painting in the German way.

2

CLOTH PICTURES, 1966–1972

MODERNISM BY THE YARD

Sometime around August 1966, Palermo began to sew paintings.[1] He had just been named Beuys's Meisterschüler, and this honor probably encouraged him to pursue new directions. Most of these so-called Stoffbilder, commonly referred to as cloth pictures,[2] consist of two or three horizontal bands of store-bought cotton. Palermo arranged the bands on the floor, had them sewn together precisely with a sewing machine, and mounted them on a stretcher. With few exceptions, these cloth pictures are square; about half of them measure two by two meters. From around 1967 on, Palermo added a layer of Nessel underneath the dyed cotton, to protect the upper layer from stretching damage, to prevent the stretcher from showing through, and to solidify the colors.[3] Deceptively simple, the cloth pictures engage with a number of issues, both artistic and political, that were of concern to the artist: the German economic miracle, which had recently reached its peak; the proliferating art market in Germany; and the role that modernist painting, as defined by the American critic Clement Greenberg, played in the country's art world during the 1960s. The Stoffbilder are made of *Stoff*, "cloth," but they also present Stoff in the sense of subject matter; meaning is in the material.

The curator Gerhard Storck's catalogue of the cloth pictures presented the first in-depth approach to this work group. It was published in conjunction with the posthumous 1977 exhibition of twenty-one cloth pictures, initiated four years earlier by Palermo himself, at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld.[4] Storck reconstructed the chronology of the cloth pictures and included annotated schematic renderings of the works for which he had found records. He pointed to possible later misdatings by the artist himself, made cross-references based on the pictures' materials, formats, and colors, and worked out a convincing line of development: whereas uniform, closely related, often washed-out colors appear among the early cloth pictures, in the later works Palermo increasingly combined different and more intense colors.

Palermo cared about his colors. Imi Knoebel considered his friend "the master of color" and titled the commemorative exhibition he mounted six months after Palermo's death *24 Farben—Für Blinky* (24 Colors—For Blinky).[5] In this coherent, comprehensive group of works, it is Palermo's colors that stand out immediately: intense, idiosyncratic, and often strongly contrasting hues and shades, including pink and orange, turquoise and ultramarine blue, and saturated red and blue. The German term *bunt* captures this sense of an excessive number and variety of gay, bright colors. And this is above all what Palermo's more than sixty cloth pictures are: bunt, "intensely colorful."[6]

Storck designated the works in which two colors are divided into proportions of roughly one-third to two-thirds as the basic cloth picture type because they dominate Palermo's oeuvre in number.[7] Between late 1968 and early 1969, Palermo experimented with different models of cloth pictures. He developed the so-called *Leisesprecher* (Quiet Speakers; see figs. 69 and 157) and made two cloth pictures with a color field (one yellow and one red) set asymmetrically into the lower right corner of a white field (see fig. 132).[8] Among these experimental works, most important to a discussion of Palermo's color are two small cloth collages in which the artist clearly sought ways to include more than two colors. Palermo abandoned the introduction of a narrow strip of color within the basic type proposed in one of these and instead pursued the more evenly spread-out three-stripe model proposed in the other.

Beginning with a pink, orange, and black cloth picture made in late 1968 (fig. 37), Palermo started using three colors in his cloth pictures. Hesitant at first, Palermo confidently employed this tripartite division almost exclusively in the later works dating from 1970 to 1972.[9] Often one of the three fields is black. Rather than preventing the pictures from having too much color (*Buntheit*), as Storck suggested, the black field sharpens the clashing, unusual combination of the other colors and enhances their effect.[10] In the two-color untitled cloth picture from 1970, the colors, orange and pink, hold together visu-

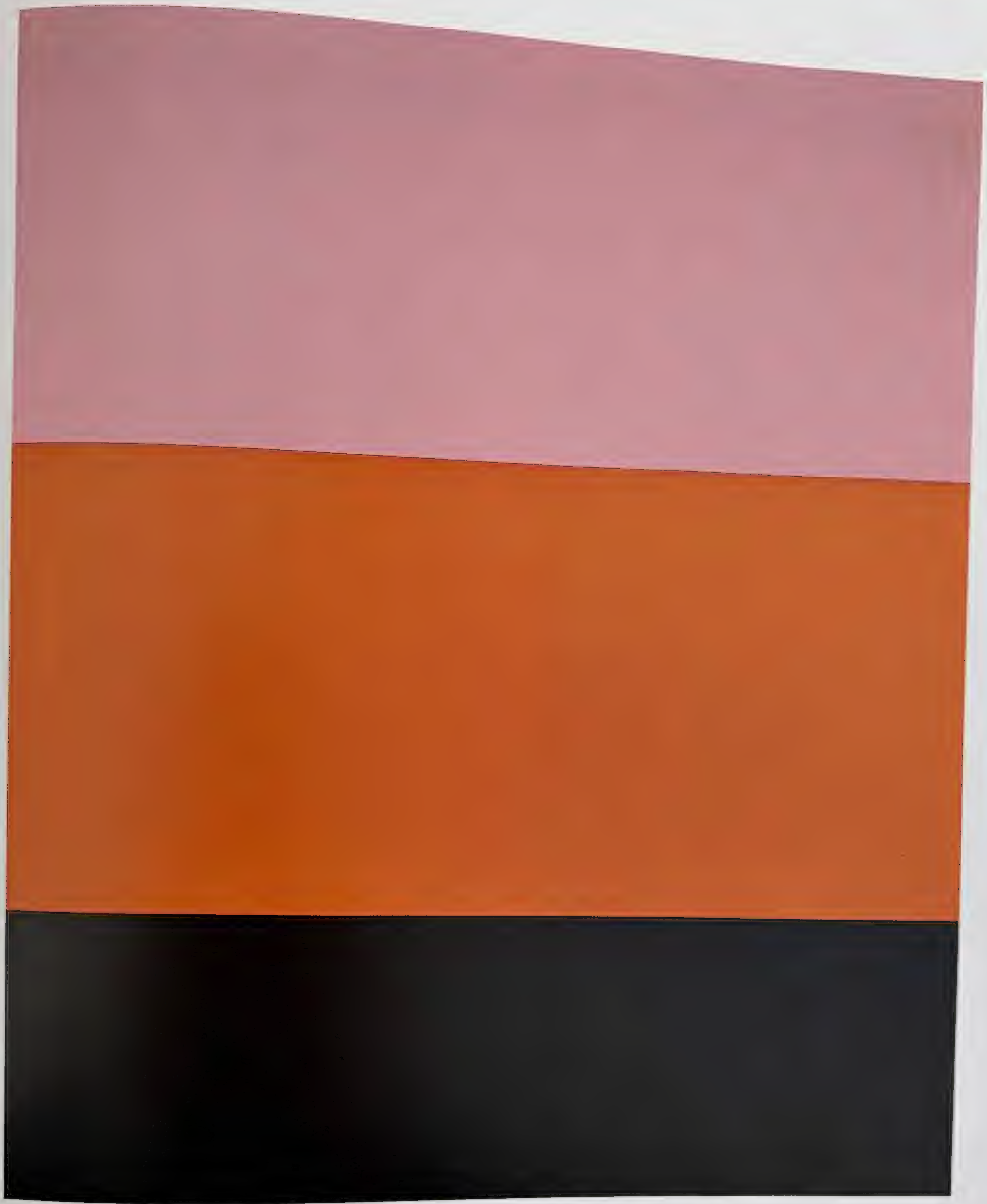


Fig. 37 *Rosa/Orange/Schwarz* (Pink/Orange/Black) (*Wvz* 79), 1968. Cotton, 200 x 170 cm. Crex Collection, Hallen für Neue Kunst, Schaffhausen.

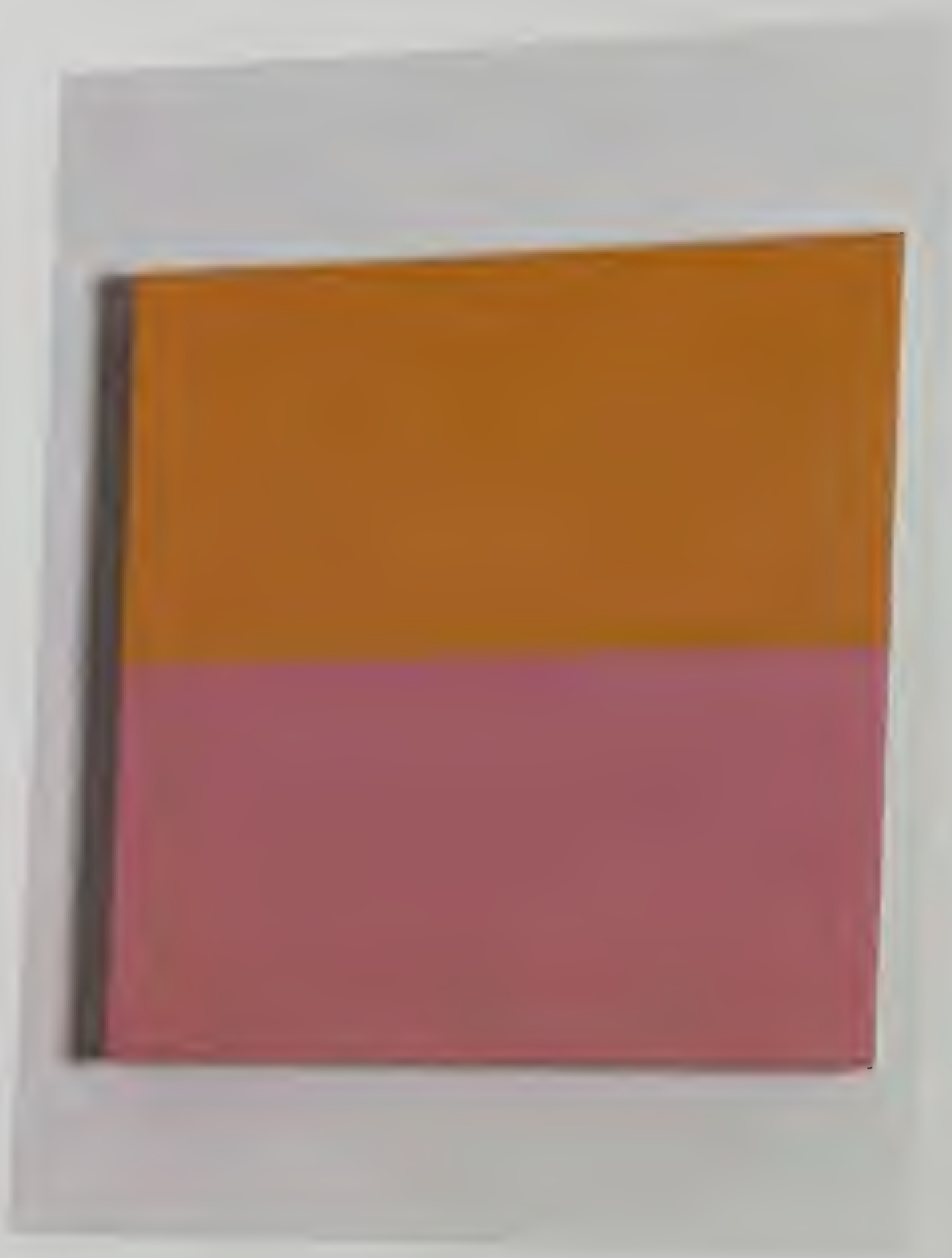


Fig. 38 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 133), 1970. Cotton, 40 x 40 cm. Private collection.

ally as “red shades” (fig. 38), whereas in the pink, orange, and black cloth picture the addition of the black field at the bottom frustrates this perception and optically pulls the other two colors apart.

We can further trace Palermo’s pursuit of a bunt quality in his cloth pictures through his conception of certain pictures as members of series. At several periods during his cloth picture production, Palermo created variations on a specific theme. Around 1968, for example, he made a series of cloth pictures that appear colorful only in combination. Each of these pictures pairs a narrow black field at the top with a more extensive color field below—brown, white, orange, orange-pink.[11] Another series of narrow-format pictures is more extreme in its coloration, containing combinations of red and white, carmine red and yellow, and indigo blue and green (fig. 39). Perhaps also related to this group, given their format, are two cloth pictures in white and black.[12] With the exception of a pair that was bought by Jost Herbig, these pieces were sold separately, and Palermo did not insist on their inherently serial character. According to Storck, Palermo had planned ten vertical cloth pictures at this point but proceeded to paint over, erase, and then destroy all but one.[13] Significantly, Palermo’s cloth picture production concludes with the *Triptychon* of 1972, in which each member displays the quasi-transformation of a primary color into black (fig. 40). The work’s internal series paved the way for the metal pictures.

There is a clear development in Palermo’s cloth pictures toward more colors, more intense, saturated colors, and more idiosyncratic color combinations. Given this course, Storck argued that Palermo had destroyed a series of cloth pictures around 1968 because their colors were dull and washed out. There are several points against this conclusion, however. Most important, some of the pictures have since been found and are included in the catalogue raisonné. In addition, among those that are still missing are pictures with bright, saturated, or strongly contrasting color areas. Palermo purportedly destroyed one of these, which was divided into blue and yellow

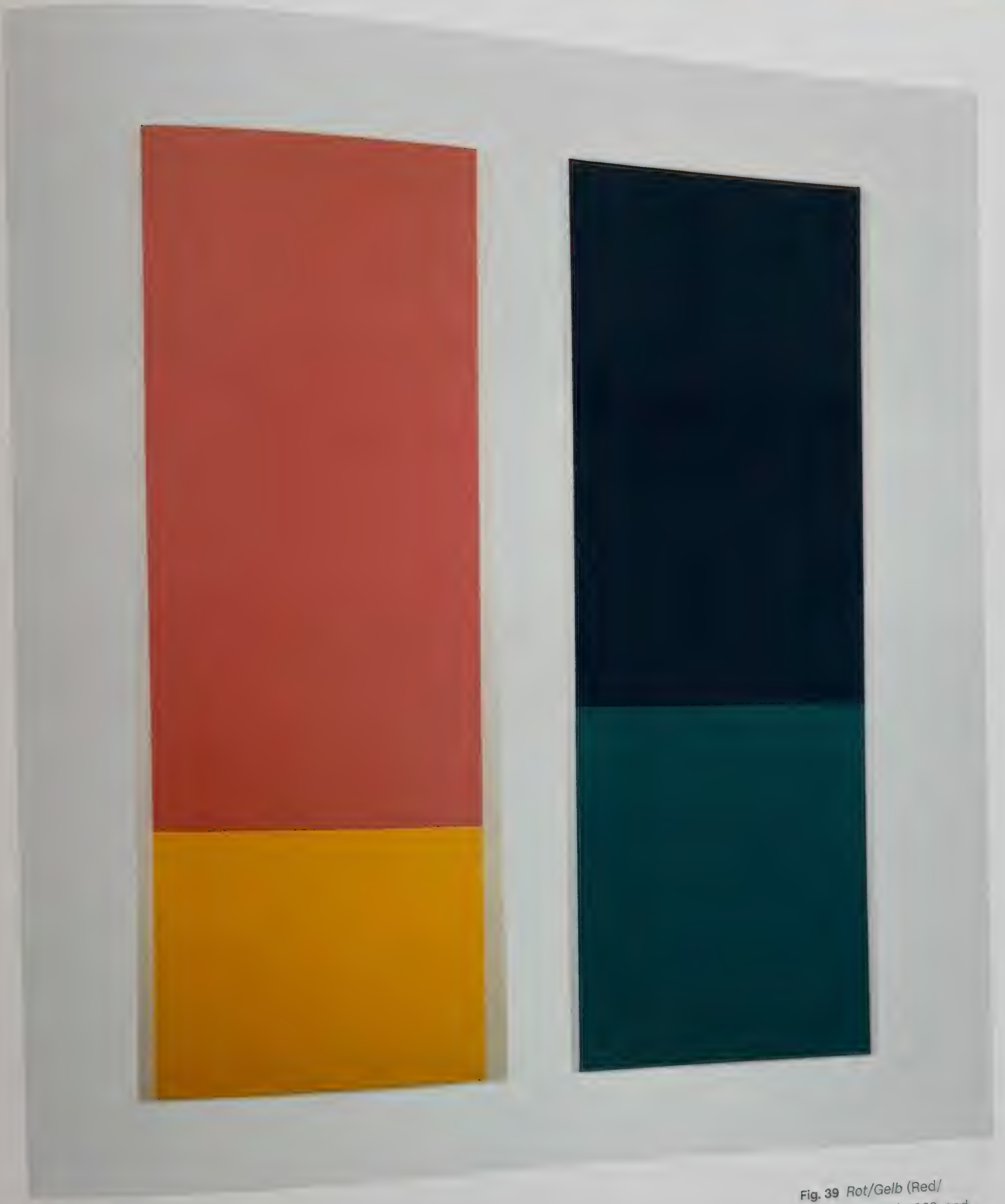


Fig. 39 *Rot/Gelb* (Red/Yellow) (*Wvz* 82), 1968, and *Blau/Grün* (Blue/Green) (*Wvz* 83), 1968. Cotton, each 200 x 70 cm. Collection Nancy Lauter McDougal and Alfred L. McDougal, and private collection.

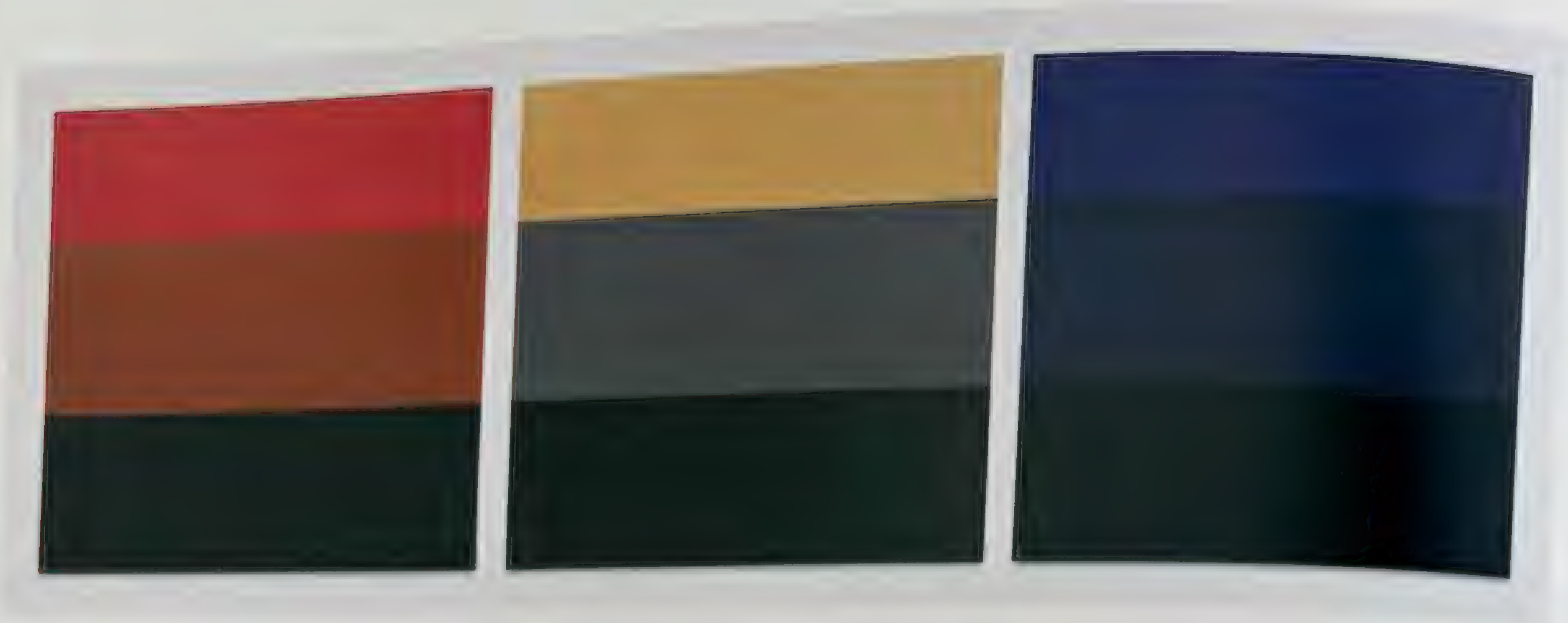


Fig. 40 *Triptychon* (*Wvz* 159), 1972. Cotton, each part 210 x 210 cm. Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.

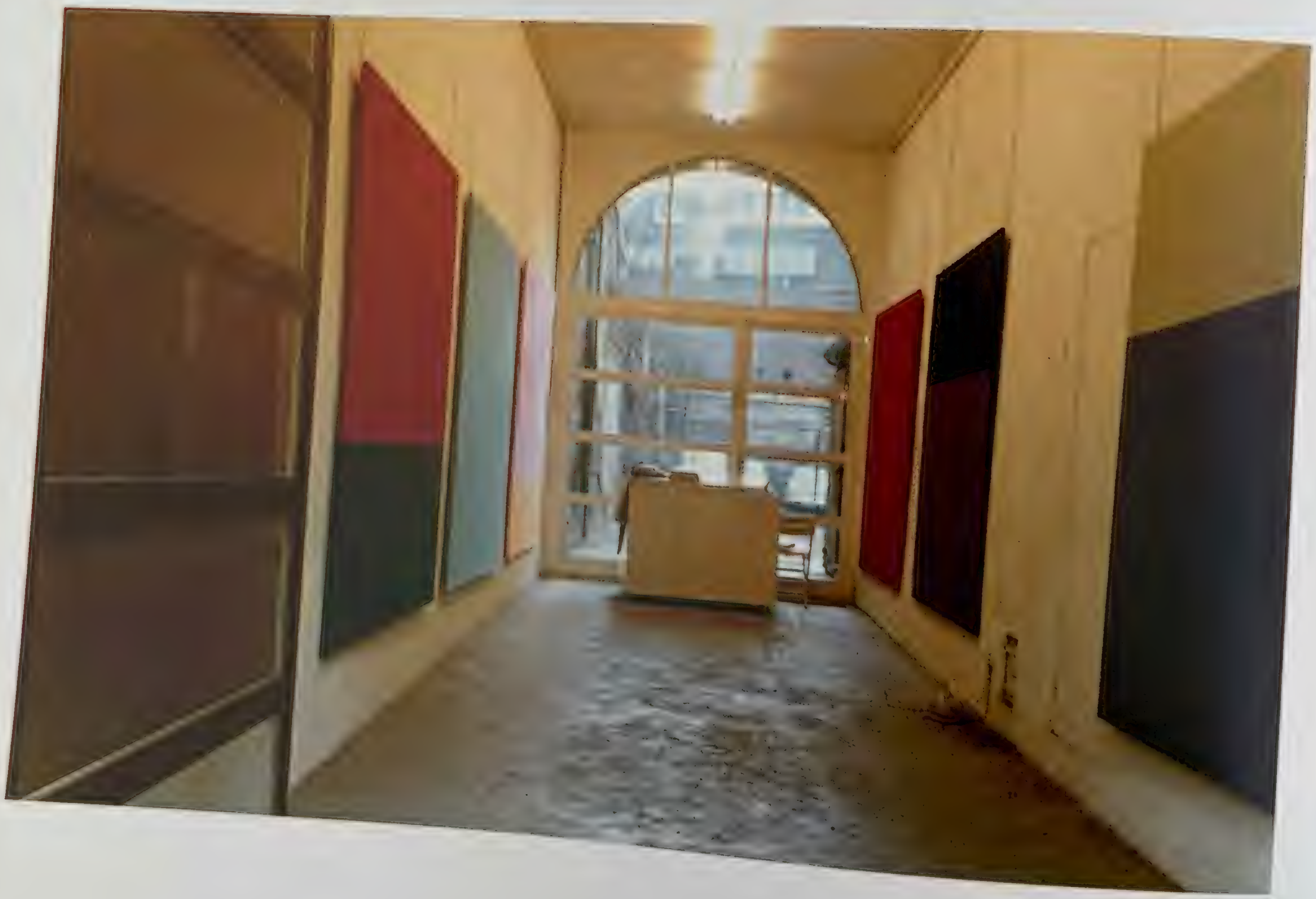


Fig. 41 *Palermo* exhibition, Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf, 6 February–1 March 1968

color fields, because there were ink spots on it; others may have been destroyed or damaged because they did not include the protective canvas interfacing, which was the case, for example, with a lost pink and orange cloth picture.[14] By the same token, we have to consider that many of the cloth pictures extant today may have faded to varying degrees.[15]

If some of the earlier works are less colorful, Palermo nonetheless found a place for them in his exhibitions. The cloth pictures initially appeared as individual pieces alongside other early work in Palermo's semester exhibitions at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 1966 and 1967, in his second one-man show at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in 1967, and in his first small museum exhibition at the Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal in 1968. But gradually the artist began showing his work groups separately, and according to his wishes Storck's posthumous 1977 exhibition at Krefeld and the February 1968 exhibition at the Galerie Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf were dedicated to cloth pictures alone.[16]

In his typically carefully orchestrated hanging of seven cloth pictures at Galerie Konrad Fischer, Palermo alternated cloth pictures that had intense, bright colors with others that had more restrained colors. In a photograph from the Fischer archives (fig. 41), we can identify a lost brown work, followed by the 1968 red and blue cloth picture (fig. 42), a lost middle blue, light blue, and middle blue piece that is clearly made of similar materials as the surviving middle blue and light blue cloth picture, and a lost pink and orange work. The three works on the facing wall were the 1967 red and pink-red cloth picture including a satin material (fig. 43), the 1968 black and brown cloth picture, and the green and dark green cloth picture of the same year (fig. 44).[17] While changing the color schemes, Palermo connected the cloth pictures visually by coordinating the types of color-field divisions. On one wall he alternated a small top band with a small bottom band, on the other wall he hung only works that had small top bands. The narrow, elongated gallery space (it was a little over two and a half meters wide but more than ten meters long) may have inspired and facilitated this serial hanging and, along with the tight spacing of about thirty centimeters between cloth pictures, it would constantly have forced viewers to look at several works at once.

The exhibition was a celebration of colors. Reviewers remarked upon their variety and strong saturation and referred to Palermo's "color radicalism."[18] The variety increased as more cloth pictures were hung together, and the "pure color masses" became overwhelming and "almost unbearable" for the reviewer of a later arrangement.[19] A visitor to Storck's memorial exhibition at Museum Haus Lange reported, "Not only the multiplicity and differences of color combinations—garish, ranging from brilliant to saturated—frustrate our desire to describe [them], but also their changing effects according to the viewer's position and the light conditions."[20]

Few contemporary reviewers failed to note that Palermo's colors were "predefined": he used only "found"—and fashionable—colors. Peter Bode from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who wrote the only reviews of the first two one-man exhibitions, at Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem and Galerie Heiner Friedrich, dismissed Palermo's work as decorative. Referring to some no longer extant precedents of the cloth pictures, he mocked in 1966, "Palermo's silliest joke is to stretch canvas over wood only to decorate it with mignonette green [*Resedagrün*] and shrill purple [*lila-grell*]." A year later, regarding an exhibition that definitely included cloth pictures, he quipped, "Palermo is not sure yet whether he wants to be a painter, an interior decorator, or a cold man of minimal art." One of Palermo's friends remarked to me, with respect to the earliest surviving cloth picture, "Pink and red was chic and in" (fig. 45).[21] Palermo shopped in the department store, not the artists' supply store, selecting his colors from what was available in the fabric departments around Düsseldorf and Mönchengladbach.

Following the preference for soft pastel colors in the 1950s, German stores in the 1960s—like their counterparts throughout Western Europe and the

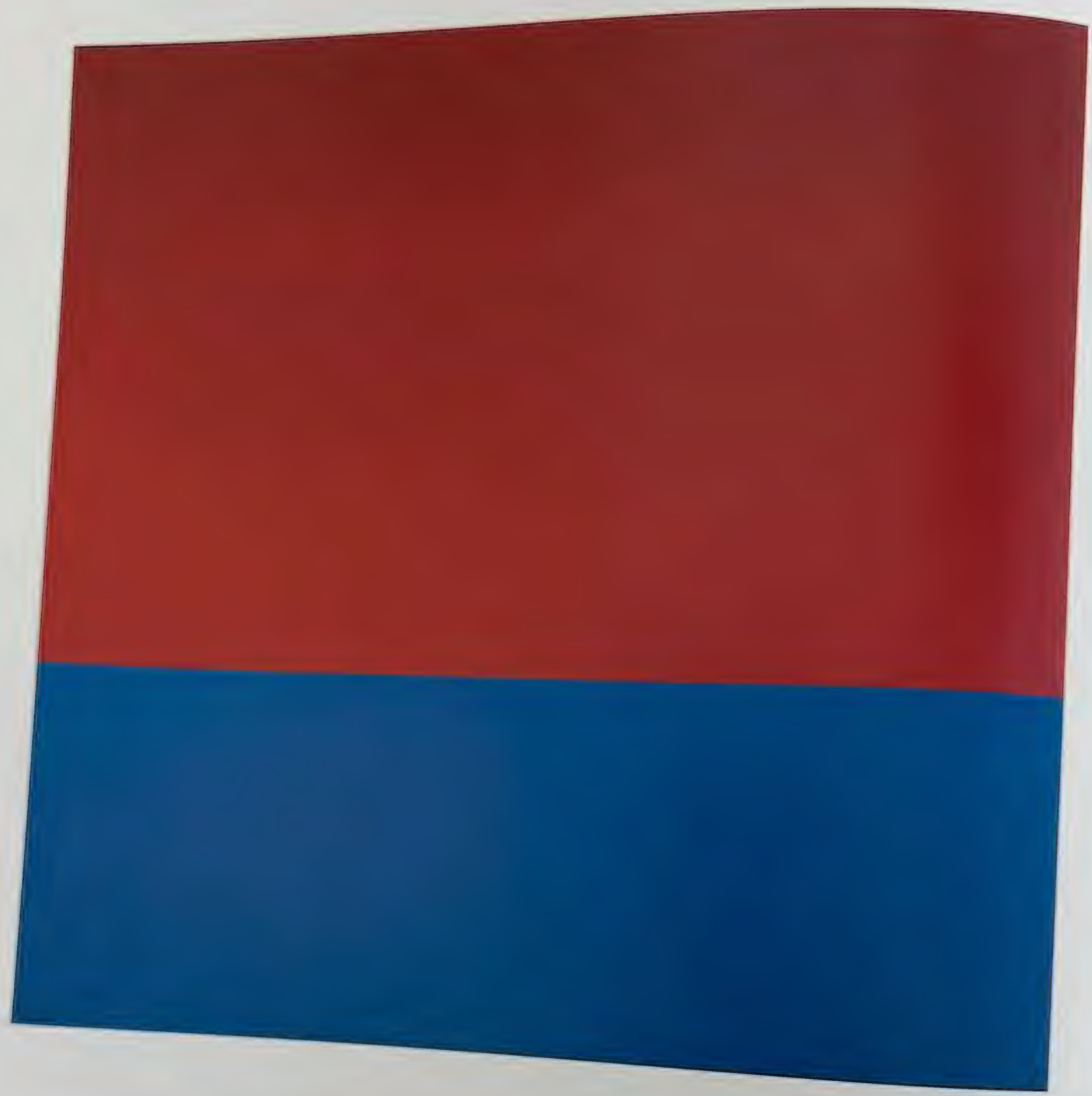


Fig. 42 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 76), 1968. Cotton, 200 x 200 cm. Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster.

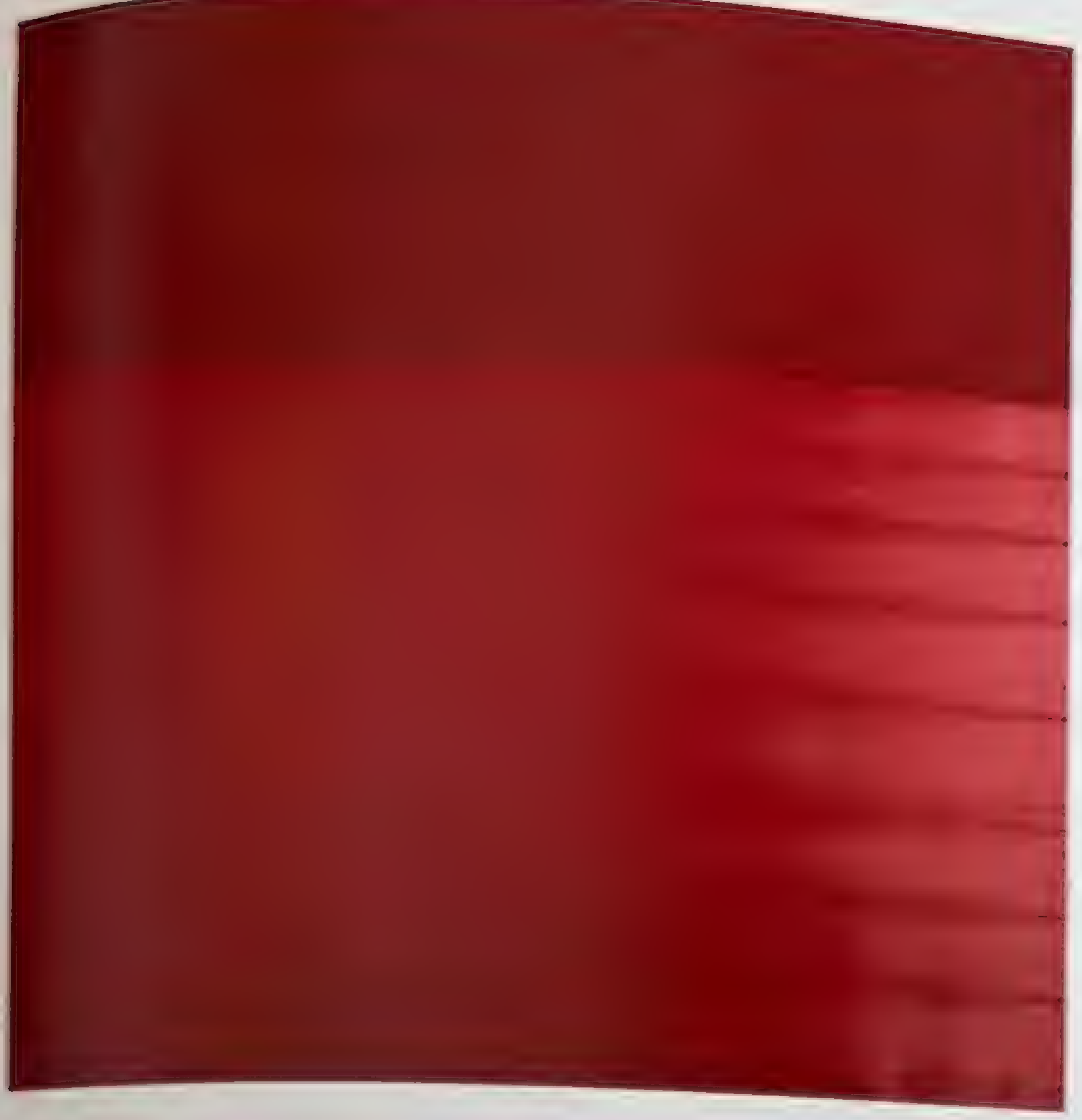


Fig. 43 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 55), 1967. Cotton and satin, 200 x 200 cm. Dürckheim Collection.

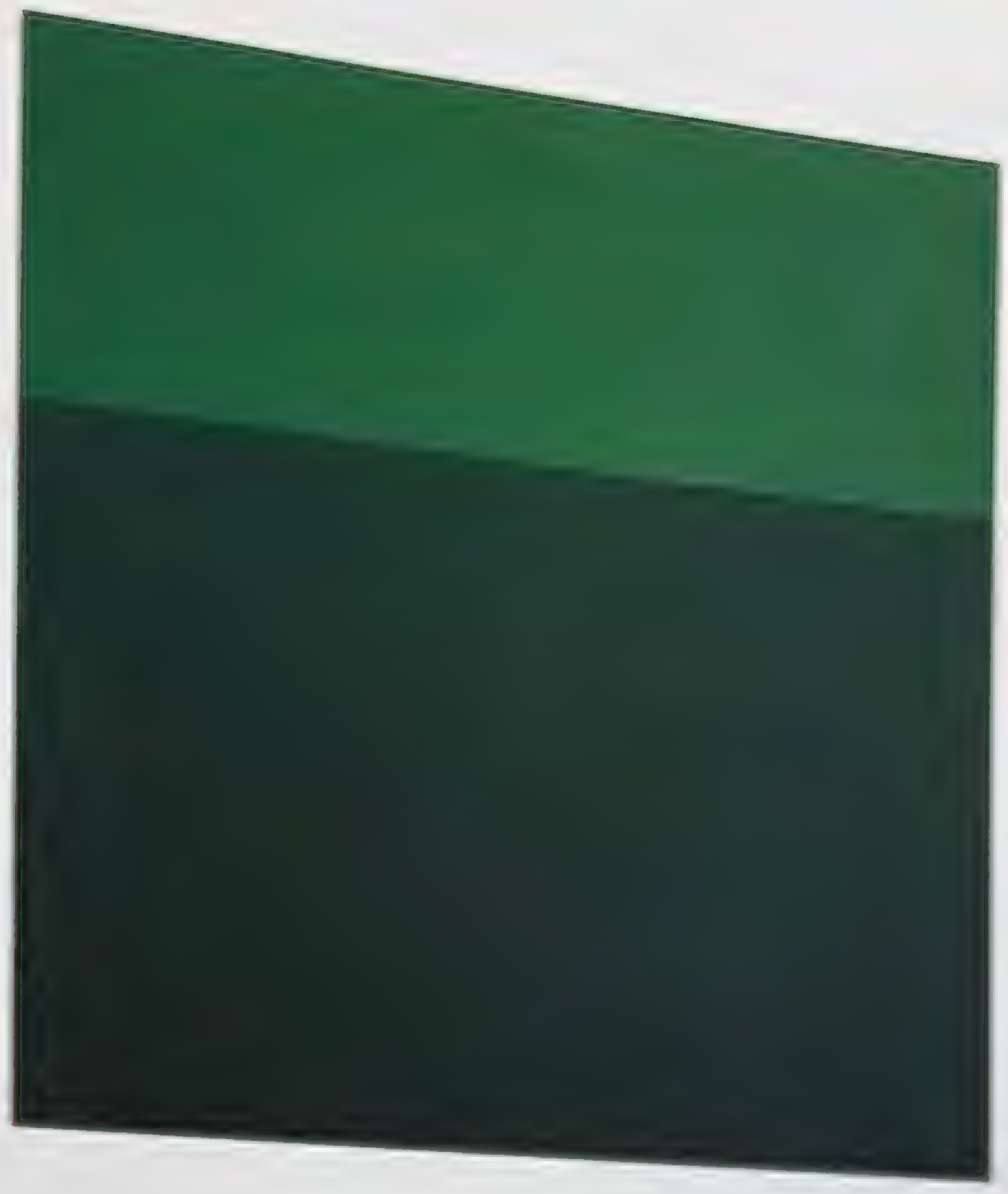


Fig. 44 *Grün/Grün* (Green/Green) (*Wvz* 57), 1967. Cotton, 198 x 198 cm. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

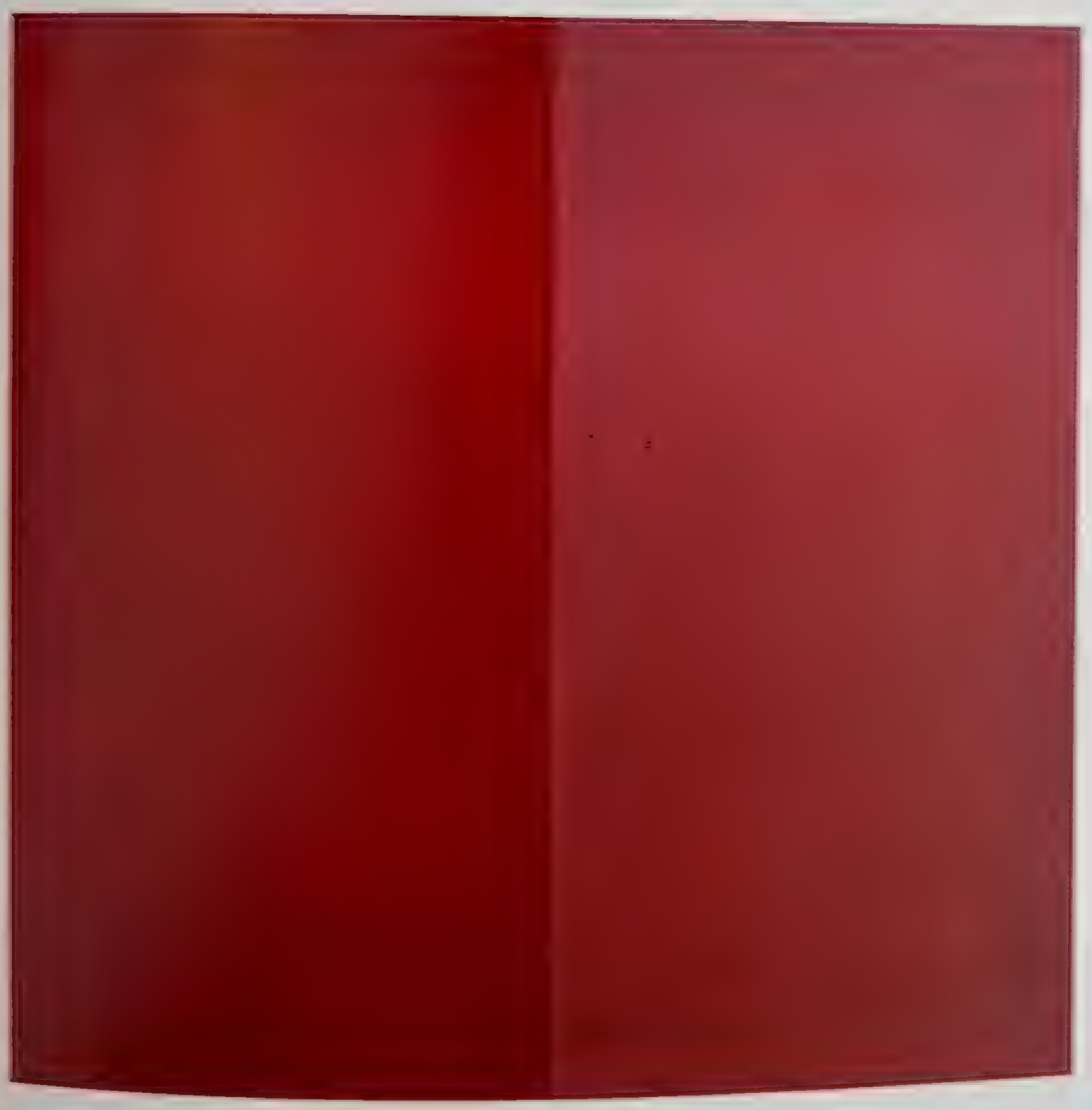


Fig. 45 *Untitled* (*Rot-Rosa*) (Red-Pink) (*Wvz* 49), c. 1966–67. Synthetic fabric, 78 x 80 cm. Collection of Christoph and Katharina Sattler, Munich.

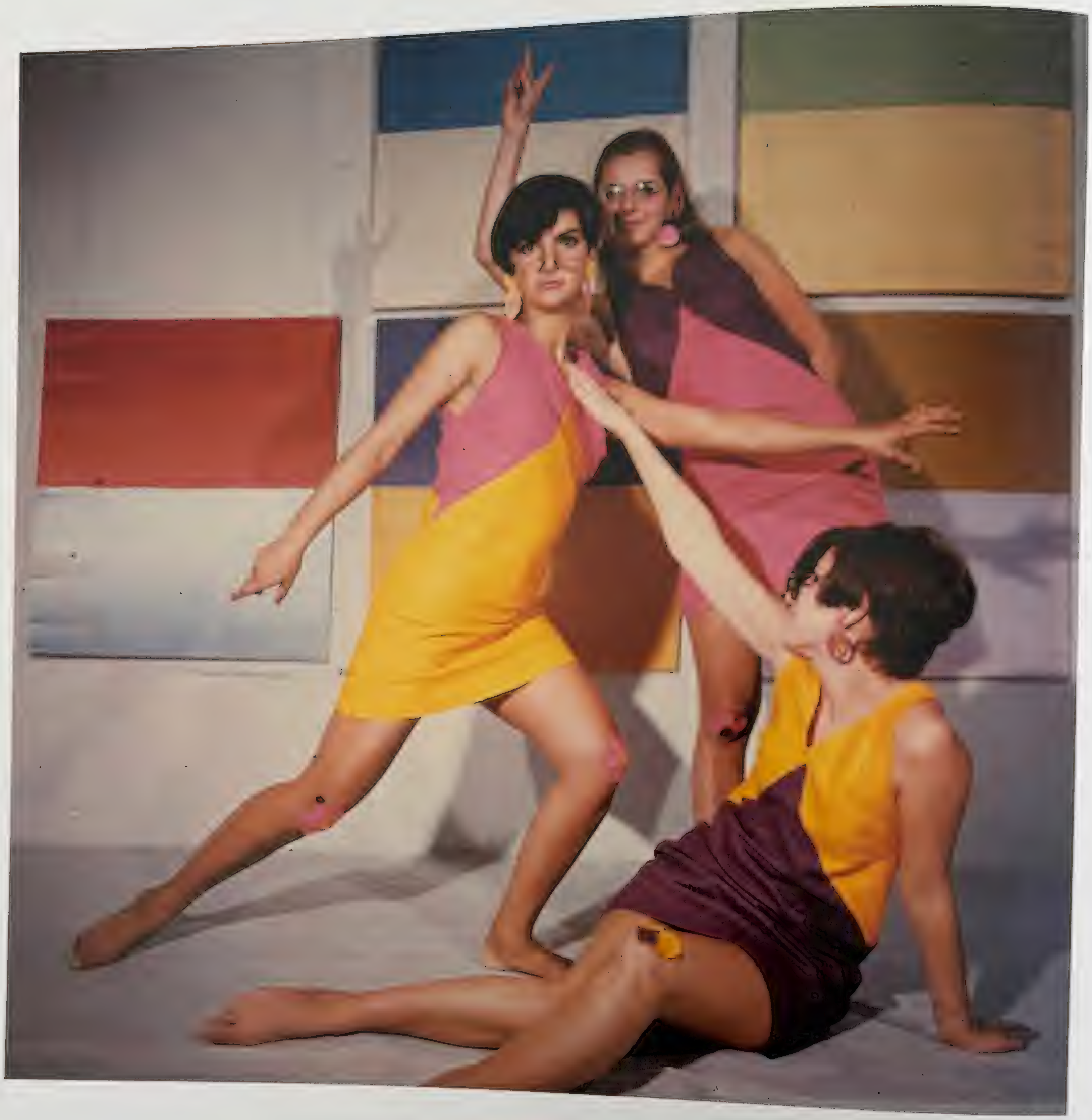
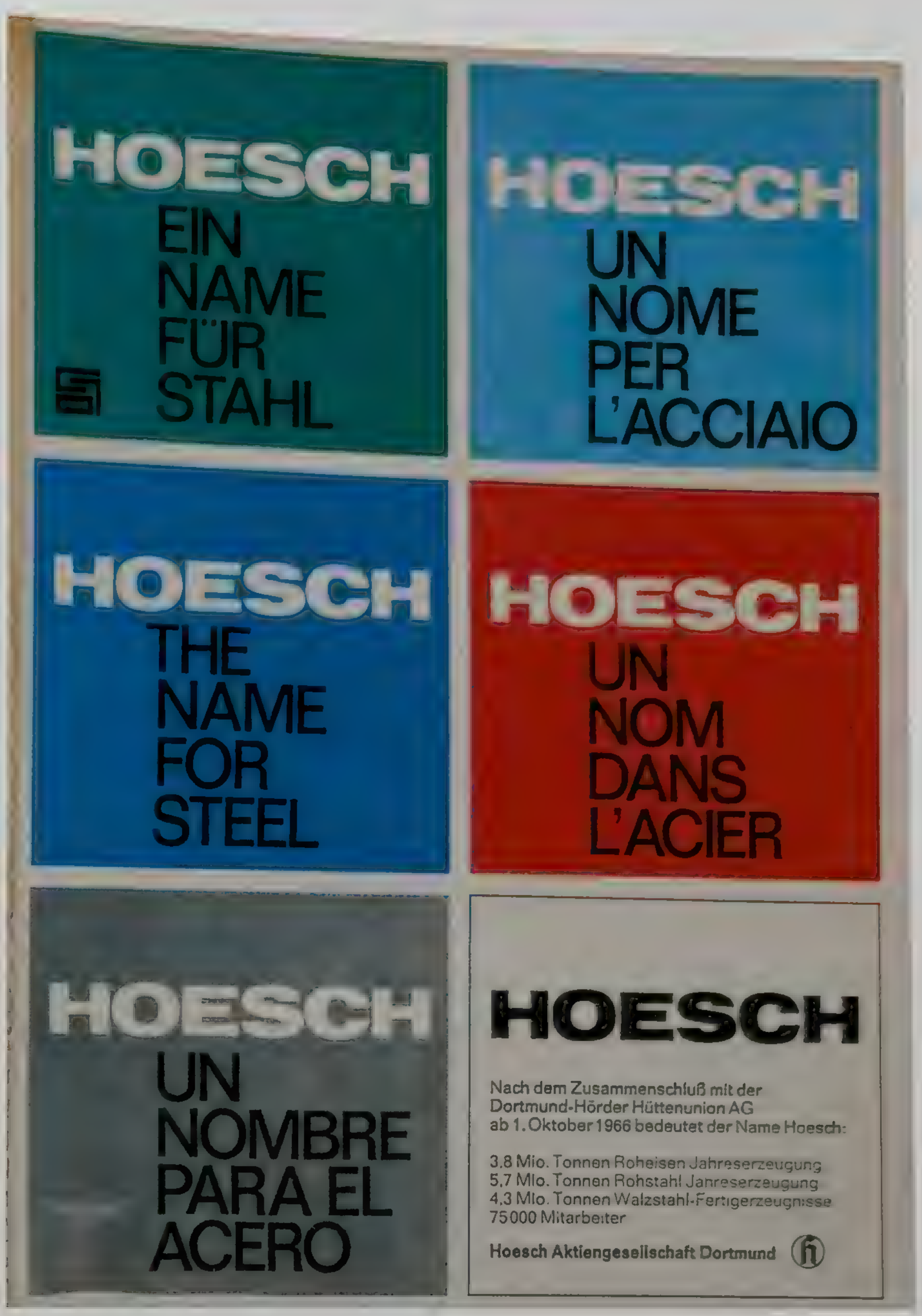


Fig. 46 Fashion shoot at Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem, Munich, with the first cloth pictures (later destroyed) in the background, c. 1966–67. Photograph by Thurid Möller.

United States—began stocking articles in precisely the bright shades that Palermo's cloth pictures capture. "Bunt" was all the rage for home decoration, clothing, and advertising alike (figs. 46, 47). A contemporary interior design manual notes, "The popularity of intense and bright colors, which are hardly toned down at all and stand out clearly as color accents, derives from the style of our time."[22] The 1968 trade fair for furniture was described by one contemporary as "a great LSD color trip. . . . The whole furniture fair resembled an inferno of hellish red, orange-yellow, sugar-pink, blinding green, and midnight blue."[23] Interior design and architecture magazines like *Schöner Wohnen* (similar to *Better Homes and Gardens*), *Bauen + Wohnen*, and *Der Bau* ran advertisements for carpet manufacturers competing to offer the widest range of color choices. And a German furniture maker developed a self-adhesive foil that allowed customers to change the colors of their cabinets and tables periodically—in fact Palermo used this foil, known as Decefix, for a 1971 variation on his cloth pictures (see fig. 109).[24] Colored illustrations were still expensive and therefore somewhat rare in German magazines, but the advertising industry exploited eye-catching colors wherever possible, for Volkswagen Beetles and painkillers alike—and, of course, on the new color television, broadcast into German living rooms starting in August 1967.

Six Friedrich, at that time the wife of Palermo's dealer Heiner Friedrich, recalls, "We made photographs in front of [Palermo's] pictures and probably also [had] a party."[25] These photographs were in fact fashion shoots. Six Friedrich, Thordis Moeller, and another woman remembered by Moeller only as Evi were captured by the camera of Thurid Möller, sister of Thordis and a professional fashion photographer, probably sometime in 1966. The three young women model mini-dresses designed by Evi in front of a series of no longer extant cloth pictures by Palermo: except for the flowery knee ornaments, clothes and pictures made a perfect match of hi-fi colors and crisp color fields (see fig. 46).[26] Party or not, the women were having a good time.



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Nach dem Zusammenschluß mit der
Dortmund-Hörder Hüttenunion AG
ab 1. Oktober 1966 bedeutet der Name Hoesch:

3,8 Mio. Tonnen Roheisen Jahreserzeugung
5,7 Mio. Tonnen Rohstahl Jahreserzeugung
4,3 Mio. Tonnen Walzstahl-Fertigerzeugnisse
75000 Mitarbeiter

Hoesch Aktiengesellschaft Dortmund

Fig. 47 Hoesch advertisement, *Der Spiegel*, 3 October 1966, inside back cover

Palermo's cloth pictures participated in and formed a backdrop to their era. Colorfulness appealed to the progressive, optimistic spirit of the time, to a consumption-oriented German audience that reveled in the waning years of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the "economic miracle," which had encompassed the rapid rebuilding of war-ravaged industries, a historically low unemployment rate, the largest growth of the gross national product in the country's history, an ever increasing availability of goods, and rising standards of living for average citizens.[27] Germans now boasted new furnishings, decorative objects, televisions, washing machines, cars, and vacations in foreign countries. Fueled by American help under the Marshall Plan, the currency reform of 1948, and the great demand for German exports in the wake of the Korean War, the economic miracle was advanced by Ludwig Erhard, its "father," who, while serving as economic minister in the 1950s and as chancellor from 1963 to 1966, single-handedly instituted classic liberalist policies that allowed the economy to follow its own course. As chancellor, his goal was a performance-oriented affluent society (*Leistungs- und Wohlstandsgesellschaft*) and the continued satisfaction of the "materially oriented basic constitution of wide circles of the population."[28] Around 1966–67, the gross national product declined and unemployment rose. This recession was the first check in the miracle, accompanied by electoral gains on the far right and a crisis in the defense ministry. Yet immediate changes in financial policies and government (the formation of the so-called Grand Coalition of Christian Conservatives and Social Democrats under Kurt Georg Kiesinger) managed to avert a full-blown crisis. By 1968 the boom was back, and Germans were trying hard to hold on to their newfound standard of living.[29]

Palermo's color thus had cultural significance, an idea that had earlier been propounded in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's color theories, which Palermo, with his fervent interest in color, may well have known. In *Entwurf einer Farbenlehre* (Outline of a Color Theory; 1810), written largely with an audience of artists in mind, Goethe devoted a section to the "sensual-customary effect of color," citing examples such as the ecclesiastical associations of purple, preferences for different shades of yellow among the Germans and French and for different colors among the old and young, and the dominance of vivid colors among southern Europeans.[30] The fragments of writings on color left by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein also discussed color in cultural terms, and Palermo's friend Sigmar Polke recalls that Palermo "appreciated him very much, that Mr. Wittgenstein."[31] Wittgenstein repeatedly refers to Goethe and expands on his observations about the perceptual and cultural relativity of color from a linguistic perspective, arguing that different people have different referents in mind when they speak of the mixtures and qualities of colors.[32]

Until recently art historians paid little attention to the cultural meanings of colors, but in 2000 two studies were published that bear directly on the role of cultural color in Palermo's work. In *Chromophobia*, David Batchelor examines anxieties about color within Western culture and locates a shift in the 1960s among American artists, who "abandoned the spectrum, the pure unbroken continuum, for the more localized, contingent, materially and culturally specific colour event. In the process, they abandoned painting."[33] Contrary to this trend, Palermo stuck with painting but allowed it to become inflected by the materially and culturally specific color event. In *Blue*, Michel Pastoureau traces the changing meaning of a single color from its "barbaric" connotations in classical antiquity to its status as the most popular, pervasive color in the Western world, and argues that "it is society that 'makes' color, defines it, gives it meaning, constructs its codes and values, establishes its uses, and determines whether it is acceptable or not. The artist, the intellectual, human biology, and even nature are ultimately irrelevant to this process of ascribing meaning to color."[34] That artists have no agency to determine the meaning of their color might be somewhat overstated, but certainly many of Palermo's peers fell victim to "period color." Palermo, by contrast, was sensitive to the popular connotations of his colors, as is evidenced by other pictorial decisions he made about the cloth pictures.

THE CLOTH PICTURES AND POPULAR COMMODITIES

Heiner Friedrich also remembered the "party" described by Six Friedrich, although (perhaps in keeping with his position as a dealer in "serious art") he did not mention or remember the fashion shoot but only the fate of the pictures: "Once after a pop [art] party, which we had organized, Palermo threw away half of his pictures: he just did not like them anymore."[35] Palermo destroyed cloth pictures on several occasions, and Friedrich here is referring to Palermo's disposal of all the cloth pictures recorded in Möller's photographs. These works were small—around ninety by ninety centimeters, judging from their scale in relation to the models—and they were made from taffeta fabrics like silk or from shinier synthetics. Some Palermo scholars believe that the artist destroyed another series of cloth pictures in the late sixties; Storck reports that these were made of satin and measured a hundred by eighty centimeters.[36]

We have no record of Palermo's thinking about his cloth pictures, so his willful destruction of such a large quantity of works—at least nine lost pictures are visible in the 1966 photographs—offers important insights about the choices he made with respect to their materials, construction, and meaning. Palermo clearly rejected silk, satin, and other synthetic fabrics, and sometime in 1967 he replaced them with cotton. This remained his material of choice up to the last cloth pictures in 1972, with the exception of four works that will be discussed later and the one-time experiment with Decefix mentioned above. The taffeta and synthetic fabrics he used early on were extremely sensitive to spotting, as can be seen in the present state of *Untitled (Rot-Rosa)* (Red-Pink; see fig. 45), which I speculate survived only because Friedrich had already sold it to its present owners, Christoph and Katharina Sattler. Satin, equally prone to spotting, was also shiny and reflective. All these early materials looked too luxurious, too precious. In this connection, it is important to note that some of the spots were already present when Palermo had the fabrics for *Untitled (Rot-Rosa)* sewn together, as Pia Gottschaller discovered in her recent conservation treatment of the picture. This early cloth picture, at least, is thus tied to Palermo's early objects, for which he often included evidently used materials.[37]

Palermo's cloth pictures were made not only in the colors but also from the very stuff of the economic miracle. Cotton is an ordinary, versatile cloth, and it was used at the time for dresses and tablecloths, cushions and curtains, aprons and couches; it pervaded German living rooms and closets. Indeed, Palermo's reviewers often referred to his material as *Konfektionsstoff*, a technical term for fabric used in mass-designed and mass-produced clothing. His cloth pictures were also discussed in terms of *Stoffbahnen* and *Farbbahnen*, "lengths of fabric" and "lengths of color."[38] The cloth pictures' horizontal arrangements, which replaced the short-lived vertical organization seen only in one surviving cloth picture, *Untitled (Rot-Rosa)*, preserved the memory of their origin in the bolt of fabric, unrolled from left to right or right to left. In fact, the difficulty of handling lengths of fabric several meters long in any way other than sideways while working on the floor probably influenced the shift from a vertical to a horizontal layout, especially after the dimensions of the cloth pictures grew to four square meters. Palermo's pragmatic solution to working with his material was an extension of its commercial handling in the store.

But Palermo's cloth pictures were more deeply immersed in the cultural taste of the time than evidenced simply by their colors and materials; their geometrical shapes were extremely fashionable as well. In 1966 styles by the French designer André Courrèges hit German magazines and stores, and his "crisply tailored and squared-off shapes" set the fashion for years to come, also affecting young German designers like Evi, whose dresses were modeled in front of Palermo's cloth pictures.[39] Advertising found simple geometries and clear demarcations useful—as in the Hoesch advertisement for steel, for example—because their regularity, conciseness, and precision made them stand out from the flood of visual stimuli with which German society was being inundated.[40] It is not surprising that the cloth pictures are Palermo's best-known work today, a Palermo brand, as it were. Their combination of clear shapes, regularly and strongly saturated fields of color, and large size implant them in our memory.[41] It is also not surprising that they elicited widespread analogies to flags among reviewers. The works were said to have a signaling quality and were described as stubby flags and flag pictures; one critic even suggested taking the cloth off its stretchers to enhance their flaglike character.[42] Perhaps because of his interest in making the cloth pictures draw attention to themselves, Palermo did not follow up on an experiment with patterned cloth in a small 1967 picture, where a greenish-gray ground is crossed by orange, turquoise, pink, and yellow diagonal lines (fig. 48). With its detailed pattern it was too fussy to act as a signal flag for the economic miracle.

Crucial to Palermo's cloth pictures, then, are the many characteristics they share with specific aspects of German consumer culture of the period. Indeed, Joseph Beuys recalled that his student was interested in "the way people live, the way they live in their space. Human habitation, that was very important to him. The way they inhabit, the way they live, what chairs they sit on, or what they have around them, what they stuff into themselves."[43] Yet equally important, as evidenced by Palermo's pragmatic approach to making them, the cloth pictures exhibit characteristics of commodities on a more general level. In addition to using simple shapes, Palermo chose a standard format, the square, for his color fields, following the destruction of the early series of rectangular works. Some scholars, stressing his use of commercial fabric, have argued that the sizes of the color fields were determined by German industrial standards for cloth width (known as DIN for *Deutsche Industrie Norm*). Anne Rorimer and Hans Dickel identify the DIN as 80 centimeters; Thomas Lange states that it is between 120 and 160 centimeters.[44] All of these claims are correct—cloth in Germany continues to be sold in widths of 80, 90, 120, 140, and 160 centimeters—but they are beside the point. What matters is the general appearance of a standard in Palermo's one third–two third divisions, and the impression of standardization that the prevalent two-by-two-meter format made on German viewers who slept in two-meter-long beds and walked through two-meter-high doors.

Also characteristic of commodities is the fact that many cloth pictures were conceived and hung serially. Sharing the same format (square), structure (horizontal), and fabric (cotton), the cloth pictures offer what one reviewer called a kind of *durchbuchstabieren*, a systematic running through of all possible appearances and effects, literally a "spelling through from beginning to end."[45] A more obvious quality of commodities that Palermo seemingly adapted for the cloth pictures is their semi-mechanical fabrication on a sewing machine, which may explain why this is his largest body of work (he made a total of sixty-six). Moreover, the regular seams are prominent, constituting one of the few visual sensations in an otherwise rather bare picture: the stitching is partially exposed because of the tension created by the stretcher, and color fields are occasionally subdivided by a seam as if to emphasize the sewing process further.[46] Significantly, most of the cloth pictures were not sewn by Palermo himself—as writers who describe him as a "sewer" or "tailor" imply—but by his first wife, Ingrid, and later by Gerhard Richter's first wife, Ema, and later still by an unknown male tailor.[47] Ema Richter recalls, "[He] asked me whether I could sew his pictures together, because the seams before had been crooked and did not last that well. I had apprenticed as a seamstress. So I sewed the pictures for Palermo—quite simple. . . . Palermo pinned the individual pieces of

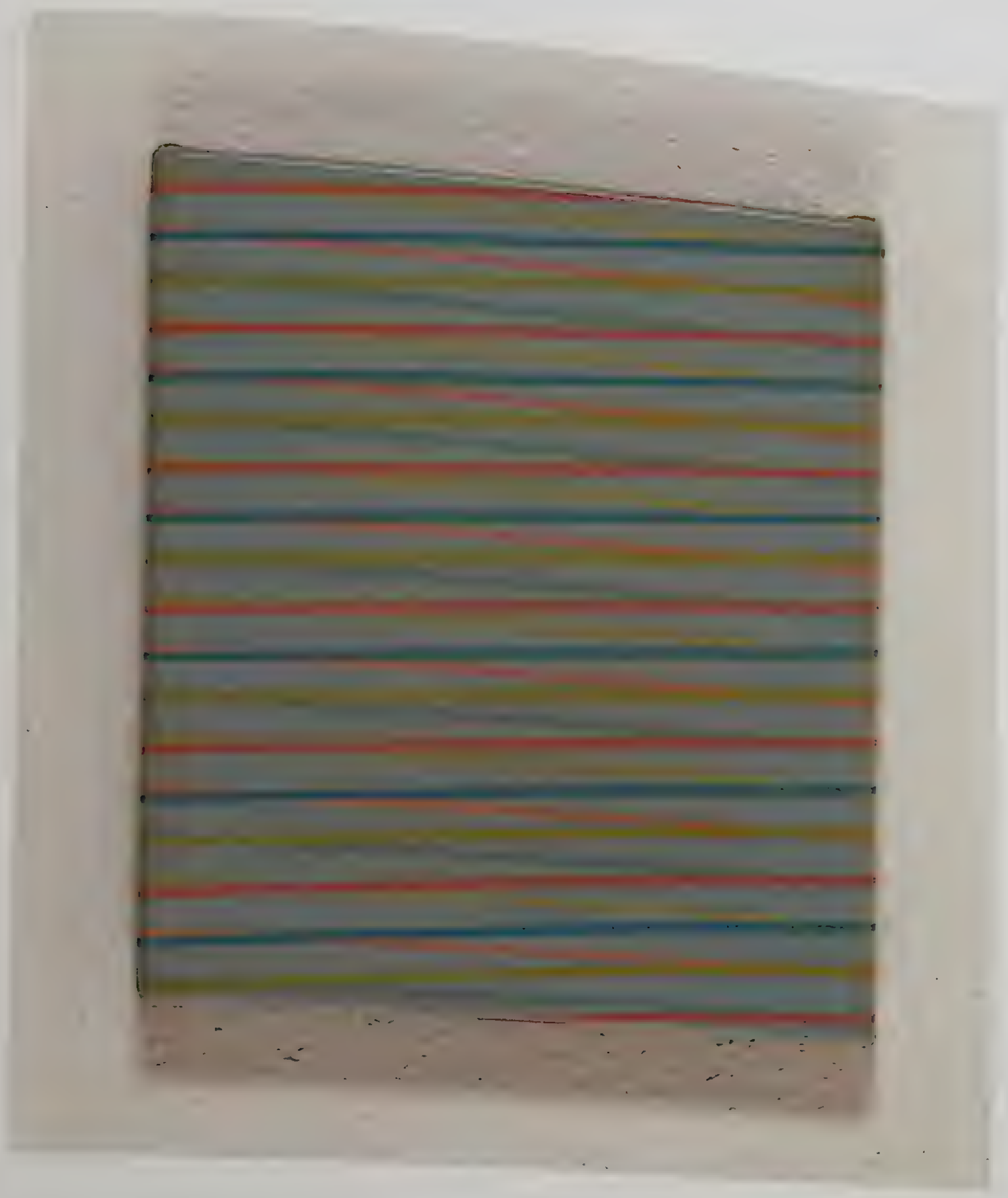


Fig. 48 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 62), 1967. Printed fabric, Nessel, polythene foil, and push pins, 27.2 x 23 cm. Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt.

fabric for me; I then sewed them together with the sewing machine. Then the fabric would be tacked onto the wooden frames."[48] It might therefore be more suitable to refer to Palermo as an "art producer," as one critic did with regard to the cloth pictures, or to compare him to a computer that produces the pieces, as did another critic.[49]

Finally, like goods in a store the cloth pictures appeal to our sense of touch. As the fabric wraps around the stretcher and creates color fields with sharp linear divisions, it gives the work the impression of solidity, of *Farbbalken*, "bars (or wooden beams) of color," or a *Farbbau*, a "building made of colors."[50] The German term *Stoffbilder*, "cloth pictures," has another relevant meaning here, for it also alludes to the pictures' materiality; *Stoff* can be both "cloth" and "subject matter" but also "substance" or "material." Our desire to touch is evoked above all by the texture of the fabric, particularly prominent in the cotton pictures. The shinier taffeta and satin, whose weave is all but invisible, work against this sense of texture, which is probably another reason Palermo moved away from them. Taffeta or satin fabrics do appear in four later cloth pictures, three dating from 1967, and one from 1970 (fig. 49).[51] Yet Palermo used them exclusively to balance more textured fabric and thus give an overall impression of materiality. Two white monochrome cloth pictures are constructed with an extremely narrow taffeta strip at the bottom, followed by a wider field of regular cotton above it, and topped by an even larger field of slightly coarse, unbleached cotton. It is as if Palermo set himself a particular challenge when he chose white here: to make what most suggests immateriality as tactile and solid as possible.[52]

The cloth pictures, then, proclaimed themselves as commodities, specifically as goods that were part of German popular culture. As such, they had commercial connotations—these works, with their up-to-date colors and shapes, were strongly reminiscent of the kind of decorations that were currently fashionable for German living rooms. In spite of the general unpopularity of abstract painting, the cloth

Fig. 49 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 58), 1967. Unbleached Nessel, bleached Nessel, and taffeta, 230 x 210 cm. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

pictures appealed to popular tastes in art. Even the more color-cautious home decorators could find a place for such works; as an interior design guide advised the timid: “Select textiles in restrained shades for large areas like carpets, curtains, and sofa covers. Movable and replaceable objects such as cushions, flower vases, and wall decorations can, however, be strongly contrasting.”[53] Examples of such interior designs are abundant in contemporary magazines, and a cloth picture would have fit right in (fig. 50). They worked well on walls. As Storck and other Palermo scholars note, their expansiveness and the fact that Palermo tended to hang them relatively low, only about thirty centimeters above the ground, made the cloth pictures integral to the wall on which they hung. Their decorative potential is realized most clearly in certain later versions made to fit specific spaces in collectors’ homes, two for Anton and Margarethe Konerding and one for Krystina and Ernst Herrmanns (fig. 51), and closely relates the cloth pictures to Palermo’s wall paintings.[54]

The cloth pictures also appealed to popular art tastes because of their references to landscape, through their “perfect picture” proportions (one-third to two-thirds) and horizontal composition. Landscapes were the most popular art genre in post-war Europe, as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s research and German demographic studies show. This was humorously confirmed by the *Most Wanted* projects of the Russian artists Komar and Melamid (Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid), who concluded, based on questionnaires, that the “most wanted” paintings worldwide were landscapes, with the exception of the Dutch, who preferred abstraction (fig. 52).[55] Palermo’s friends at the Düsseldorf academy teased him about being “nothing but a landscape painter,” and references to landscapes occur most frequently in the literature on the cloth pictures, from general remarks about their relationship to nature, to more specific analogies to particular seasons, times of the day, or Mediterranean landscapes, to descriptions that use terms drawn from nature like “heaven” and “earth” to identify color fields and discussions of the calming and perspectival effects of the horizon line.[56] While the allusion to a horizon by means of a horizontal line is so strongly rooted in our perception of the world that even the most unnatural color combinations, like pink and orange or black and orange, evoke land- and seascapes, the impression is most forceful in the cloth pictures that use blue or green. Even the three-part cloth pictures retain landscape connotations when their colors include blue and green (see, for example, fig. 51).[57]

That the idea of landscape was not far from Palermo’s mind has already been seen in the discussion of *Tagtraum II* (see fig. 24) and some of the other “Romantic” objects. In addition, around 1966 he made a series of highly abstract seascape drawings that seem to relate to the cloth pictures he was just

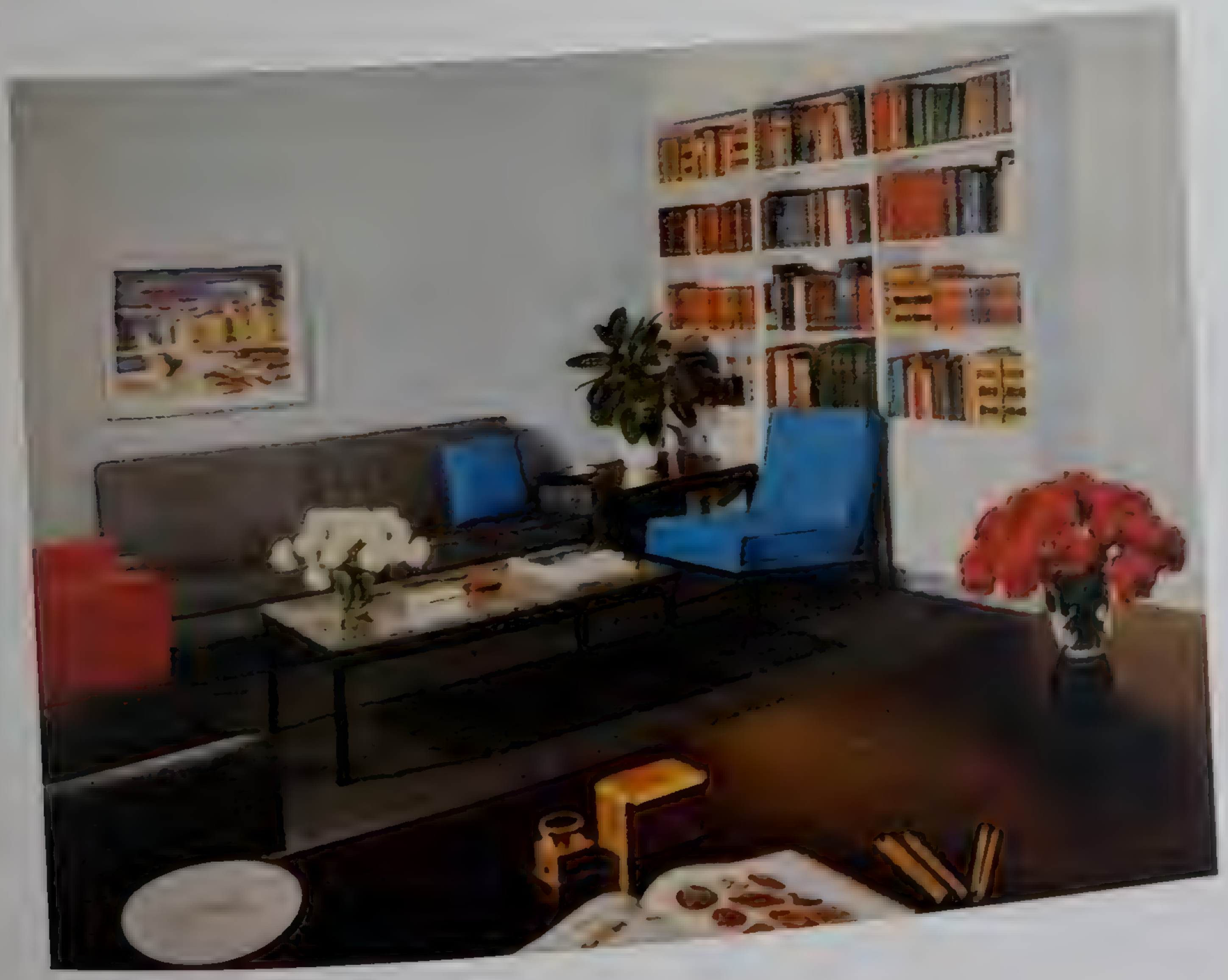


Fig. 50 Living Room, Knoll International, c. 1962. Photograph from Gerd Hatje and Ursula Hatje, *Design for Modern Living: A Practical Guide to Home Furnishing and Interior Decoration* (New York: Abrams, 1962), ill. 59.

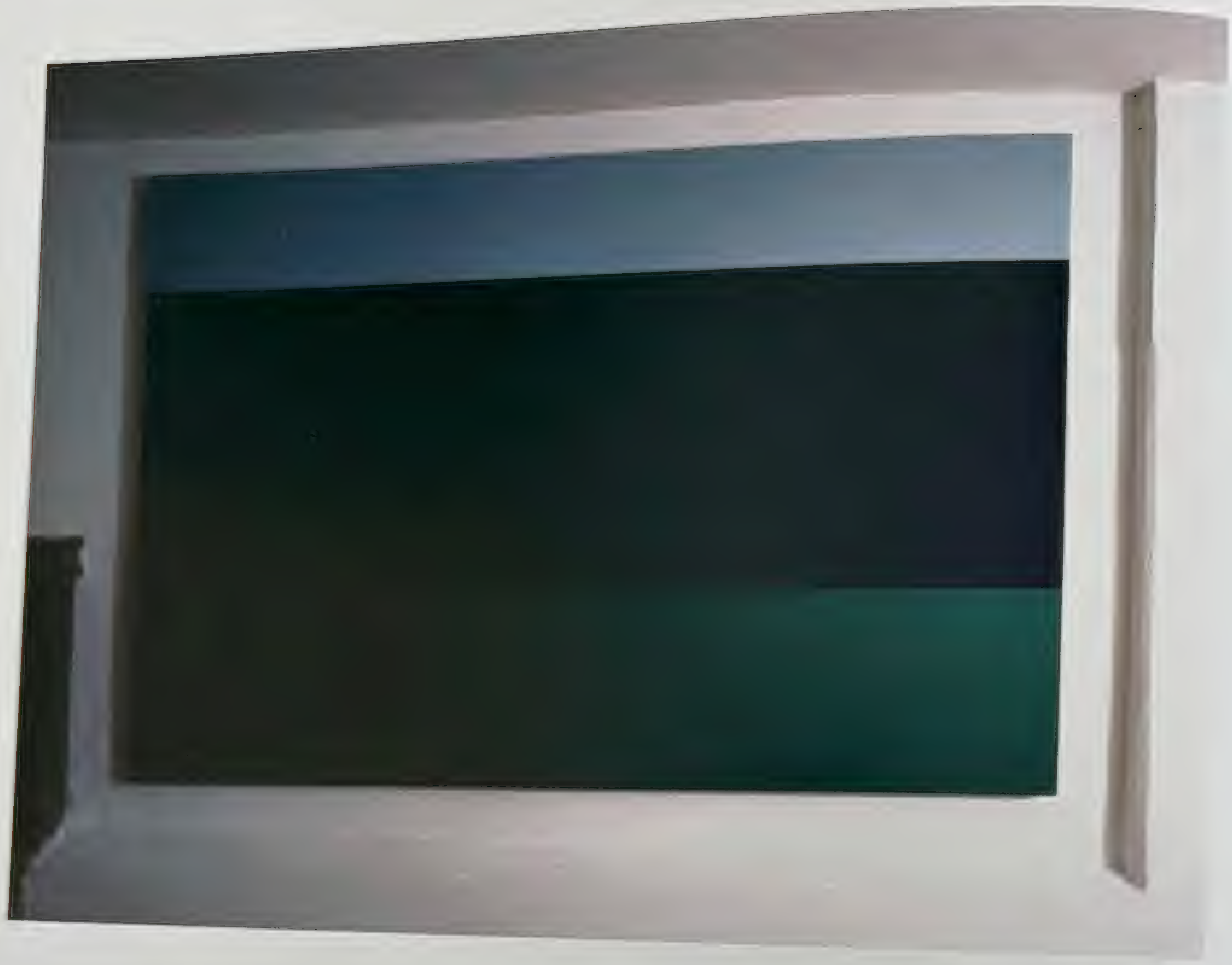


Fig. 51 *Untitled (für Tünn + Margarethe Konerding)* (For Tünn + Margarethe Konerding) (*Wvz* 156), 1972. Cotton, 160.3 x 240 cm. Private collection.

beginning to work on that same year: simple horizontal lines are the sole reference to the sea. In some of these a vertical line crosses a horizontal one, which may be an indication that Palermo's shift from vertical to horizontal structure in the cloth pictures might have been worked through the idea of sea- or landscape. This is corroborated by the fact that the most carefully drawn seascape (apparently the final image in the series) contains only horizontal block stripes reminiscent of the cloth pictures (fig. 53).[58]

Finally, the cloth pictures appealed to popular tastes because they looked American: their saturated color fields, their geometry, their minimal materials and simple construction, their planarity all reminded critics of the paintings of Ellsworth Kelly, Barnett Newman, and Frank Stella, as well as of minimalist objects (fig. 54).[59] This was not simply because Palermo was closely affiliated with two leading dealers of American art in Germany, Konrad Fischer and Heiner Friedrich, who were known mainly for their stables of New York-based artists, including Walter De Maria and Dan Flavin (Friedrich) and Carl Andre and Sol LeWitt (Fischer). In the 1960s American art was flooding the West European art world, and the German art market in particular. Documenta 4 (1968) was nicknamed "Americana" because of the extensive presence there of American pop and minimalism, and Robert Rauschenberg had won the prize at the 1964 Venice Biennale—the first time an American artist had done so.[60] Prices of artworks are notoriously hard to access outside of auction results, but it seems clear that from pop in the early sixties to minimal art near the end of the decade and beyond, contemporary American art consistently fetched prices that German artists could only dream of. As noted in the discussion of a 1974 group exhibition, "American performers got ten to twenty times the honorarium of their European colleagues."[61] In 1971 a Sigmar Polke film sold for 3,600 DM while Andy Warhol's *Chelsea Girls* went for ten times that amount; a Gerhard Richter edition sold for 450 DM while a comparable edition by Dan Flavin went for roughly seven times as much.[62] Palermo was familiar with and passionate about American art—his friends, particularly Gerhard Richter, credited him with being their main source of information about it.[63] Yet in this context, the American look of the cloth pictures was merely another way in which they seemed oriented toward the market.

Palermo's cloth pictures, from their colors to their materials to their making, were deeply immersed in the consumer culture of a peaking economic boom,

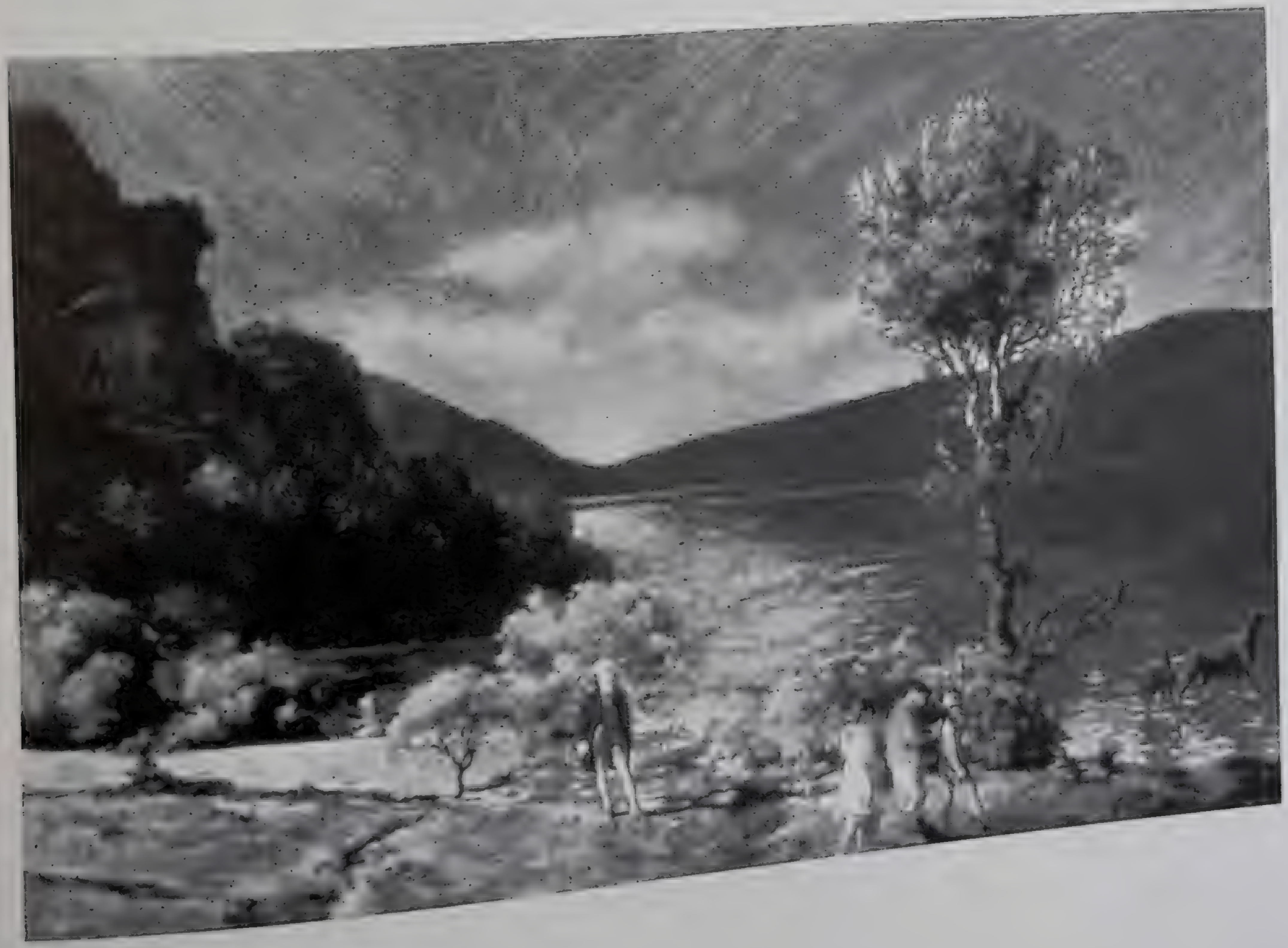
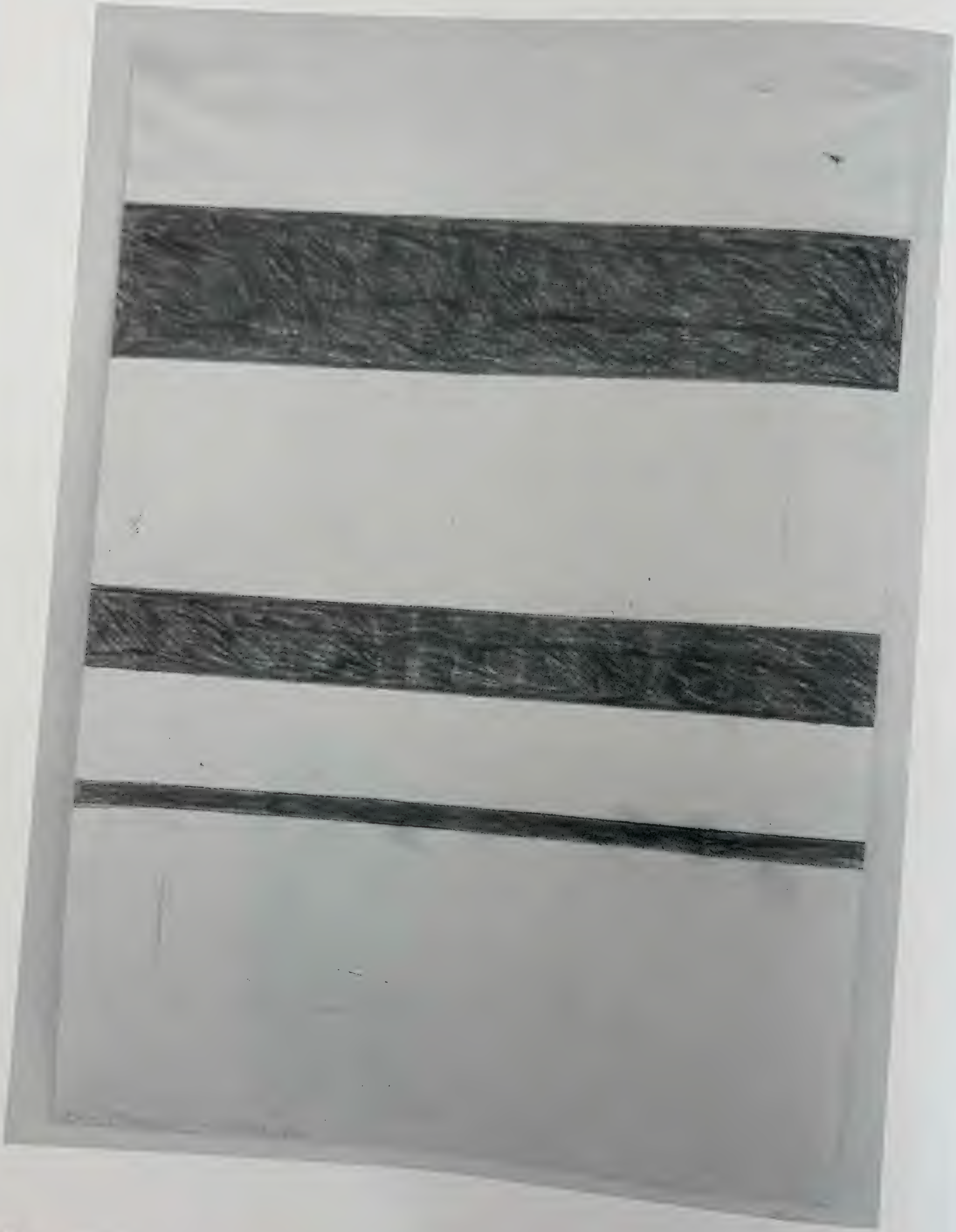
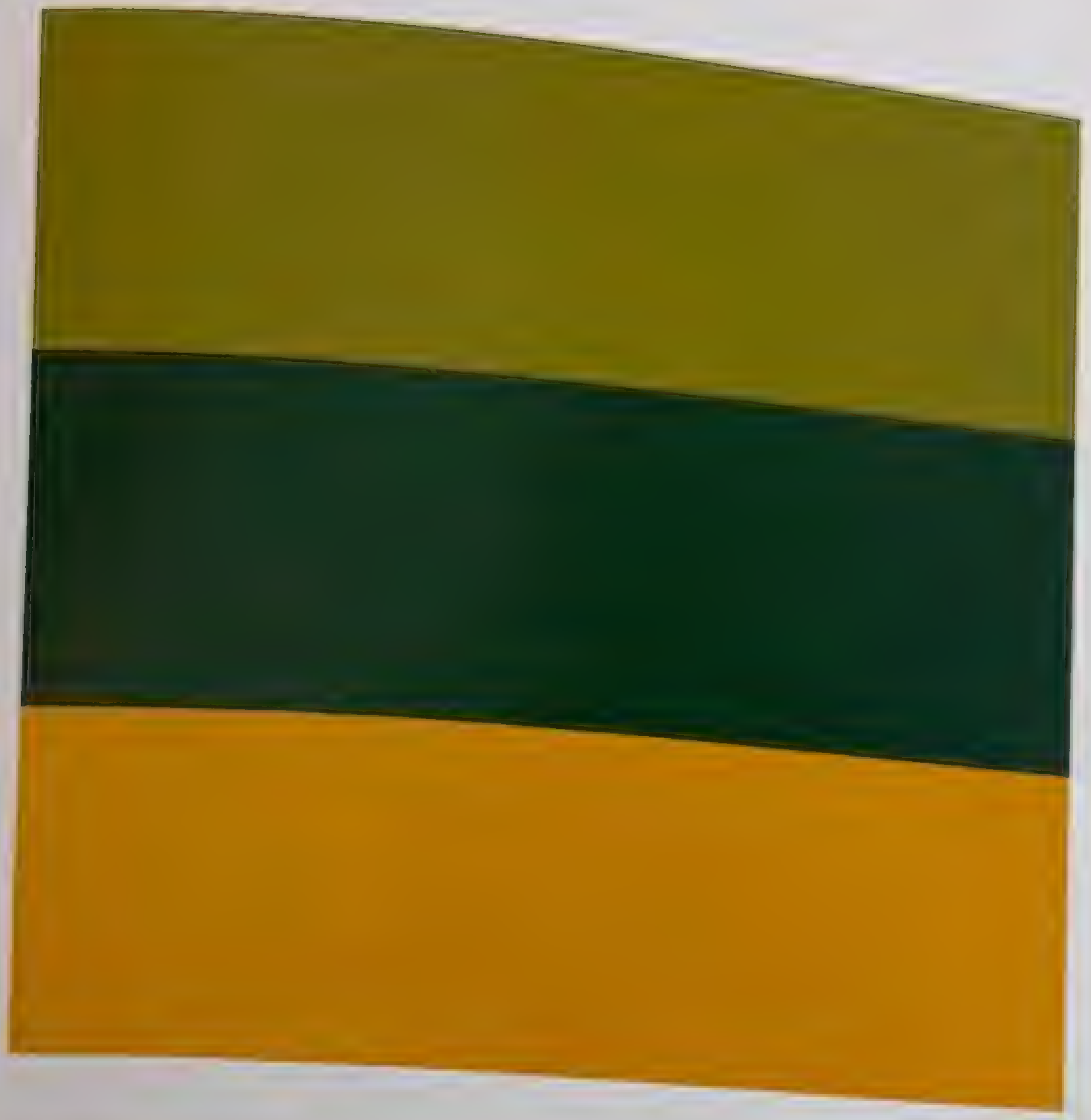


Fig. 52 Komar and Melamid, *America's Most Wanted*, 1994. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 24 x 31 in./dishwasher size. Private collection. © 2007 Komar and Melamid.





opposite

Fig. 53 *Am Meer* (At Sea) (*Wvz* 316), 1966. Pencil on paper glued on cardboard, 29.6 x 21 cm. Private collection, Hiroshima.

Fig. 54 Ellsworth Kelly, *Train Landscape* (EK61), 1952–53. Oil on canvas, three joined panels, 44 x 44 in. Private collection. © 2007 Ellsworth Kelly.

combining characteristics of popular taste with those of commodities in general, all with an eye to the market. But to what end? What does it mean to sew fabrics in popular colors, to produce standardized paintings that draw attention and interest, to paint marketable abstract landscapes and Americanisms? What was the point of Palermo's highly self-conscious referentiality? To answer these questions we must look at the development of the German art market during the 1960s.

MARKET FORCES

The marketing of art dates back at least to ancient Roman times, and its long history is marked by certain landmark events that are rightly regarded as turning points, such as the invention of woodcut prints in the fifteenth century (which allowed for the sale of multiple copies of the same image) and the proliferation of contemporary art dealers in nineteenth-century Paris. The drastic expansion of the international market for contemporary art during the 1960s represents an equally important, though largely unacknowledged, moment in this history, and an examination of this phenomenon can shed light on important aspects of Palermo's cloth pictures.[64] While the New York art world undoubtedly led the way in this expansion, with large numbers of contemporary galleries opening from the mid-forties on, certain new market phenomena, such as contemporary art fairs, first came to prominence in Germany during the 1960s.

Largely because of strategic moves by dealers, the rise of the art market in Germany received a lot of press coverage and public attention. The critic Georg Jappe pointed out as early as 1972 that there was "no country where there has been so much debate about 'Art as Merchandise,' about art as a consumer article, as there has been in West Germany and German-speaking Switzerland."[65] Many artists, including Joseph Beuys and Wolf Vostell (who staged a protest at the opening of the 1970 Cologne art fair; fig. 55), objected to what they regarded as the creative constraints and unfair practices of exclusion

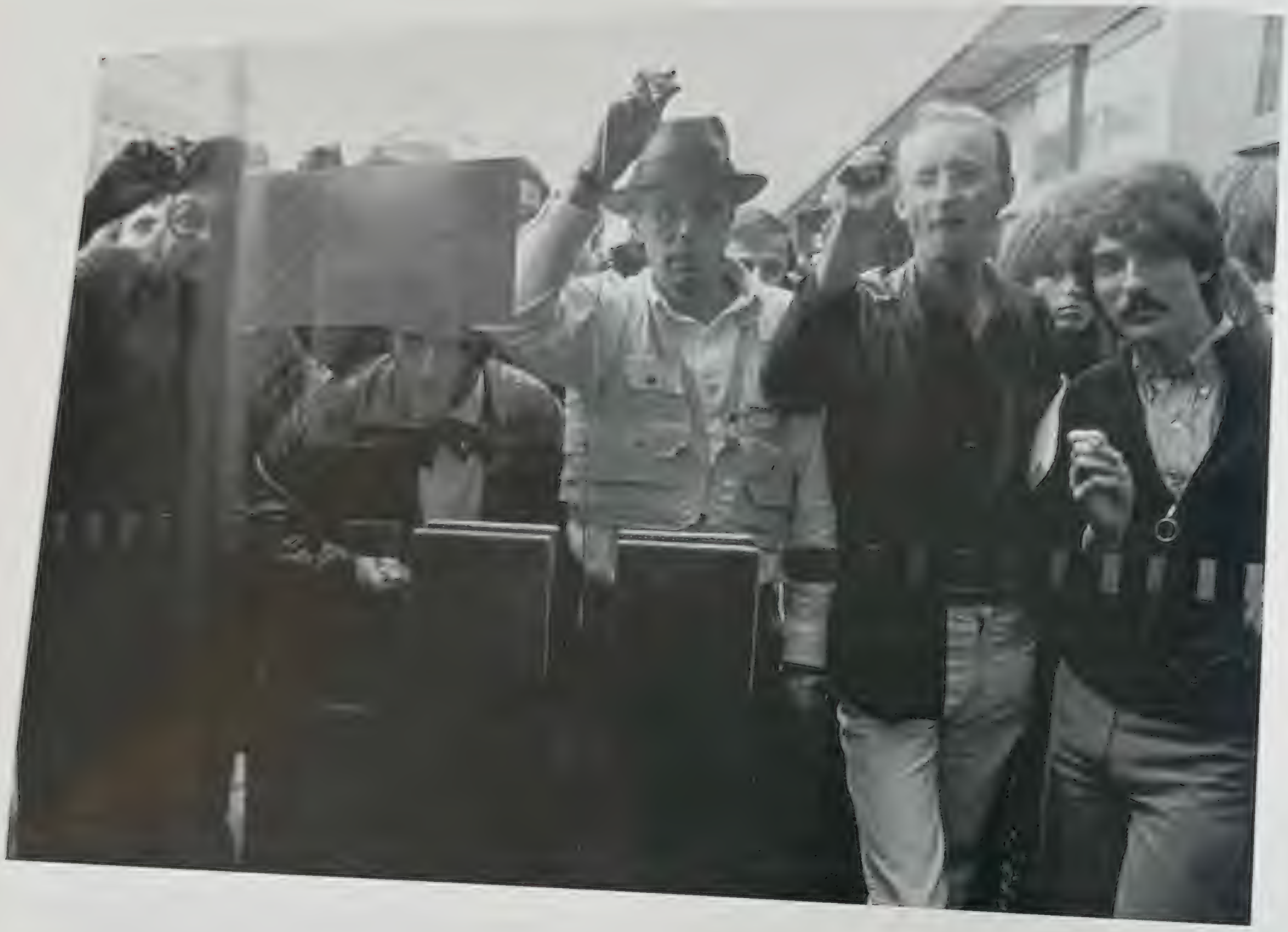


Fig. 55 Wolf Vostell, Helmut Rywelski, Joseph Beuys, Klaus Staeck, and unknown man in the protest action *Wir betreten den Kunstmarkt* (We Are Entering the Art Fair) at Kölner Kunstmarkt 70, Kunsthalle, Cologne, 12 October 1970. Photograph. © 2007 Angelika Platen, Berlin.

brought on by this trend.[66] Others openly or quietly welcomed the economic benefits and critical interest that the new market generated. Whichever position they chose to take, German artists were highly conscious of producing for a market, and this attitude was reflected in most of the art produced during this time.

The increase in the number of galleries dealing in contemporary art in the 1960s was the earliest and most obvious sign of the growth of the German art market. Throughout the decade, ten to fifteen new galleries a year opened in various cities throughout the country. There were thirty openings in 1968, fifty in 1969, and by 1973 about four hundred new galleries had opened.[67] If we limit our account to historically significant galleries we find that the number rose from six galleries at the end of the 1950s—Parnass (owned by Rolf Jährling), Schmela, Der Spiegel (owned by Hein Stünke), Springer, van de Loo, 22 (owned by Jean-Pierre Wilhelm)—to more than thirty in the late 1960s. Besides increasing in number, galleries also gained in importance as public venues for contemporary art produced in Germany and abroad. They functioned as major exhibition spaces, as lenders to museums and high-profile exhibitions such as Documenta, and as artists' agents. As written contracts (or at least verbal agreements) between galleries and artists became increasingly common, dealers began orchestrating public relations for their artists and arranging sales of their work to private collectors and public institutions.[68] As a result, the artists' legal rights became more complicated and more highly regulated, but were also better protected. On 1 January 1966 the copyright law took effect, stipulating among other things that 1 percent of resale proceeds be paid to the artist; seven years later the percentage was raised to 5 percent. In order to enforce these rights, the association Bild-Kunst (similar to the U.S. Artists Rights Society) was founded in November 1969.[69]

The invention of the fair for contemporary art had the greatest and most visible impact on the German art world of the sixties.[70] Modeled after recently established fairs for antique objects and antiquarian books, and developing ideas that had been introduced at the first Salon International de Galeries Pilotes (International Salon of Pilot Galleries) in Lausanne in 1963, the contemporary art fair was the brainchild of dealers Hein Stünke and Rudolf Zwirner, the chairman and manager, respectively, of the Verein Progressiver Deutscher Kunsthändler (Association of Progressive German Art Dealers; VPDK), which was founded in July 1966, just as Palermo was beginning his cloth pictures.[71] In keeping with its mission to "foster the interest in contemporary German and international art [and] to foster the trade with such art," the VPDK organized a five-day fair in Cologne at which members offered a selection of contemporary art for sale at prices that were intended to remain fixed for the duration of the event. The dealers hoped to attract the broad public who had never visited their galleries and to encourage young people, especially, to buy the art of their own generation. The dealers further sought to change the provincial, highly decentralized character of the German art world and turn Cologne into a strong, internationally respected art center, a move that would create "productive competition."[72] Cologne was a sensible choice: the city was known as a *Messestadt*, a host city for trade fairs, and was home to a large number of galleries; in addition, it was located near Düsseldorf, whose art academy had attracted many young artists and a number of galleries to the city.

Kunstmarkt 67 opened its doors on 13 September 1967 in Cologne's Gürzenich building and Kunstverein. The booths of eighteen galleries exhibiting more than two hundred artists were visited by sixteen thousand people and brought in returns of one million deutschmarks. Given this initial success, the VPDK established the Cologne art fair as a yearly institution, and the numbers steadily increased—the following year brought thirty thousand visitors and two million deutschmarks in returns to twenty-one galleries, and in 1970 fifty thousand people attended, spending five million deutschmarks at the booths

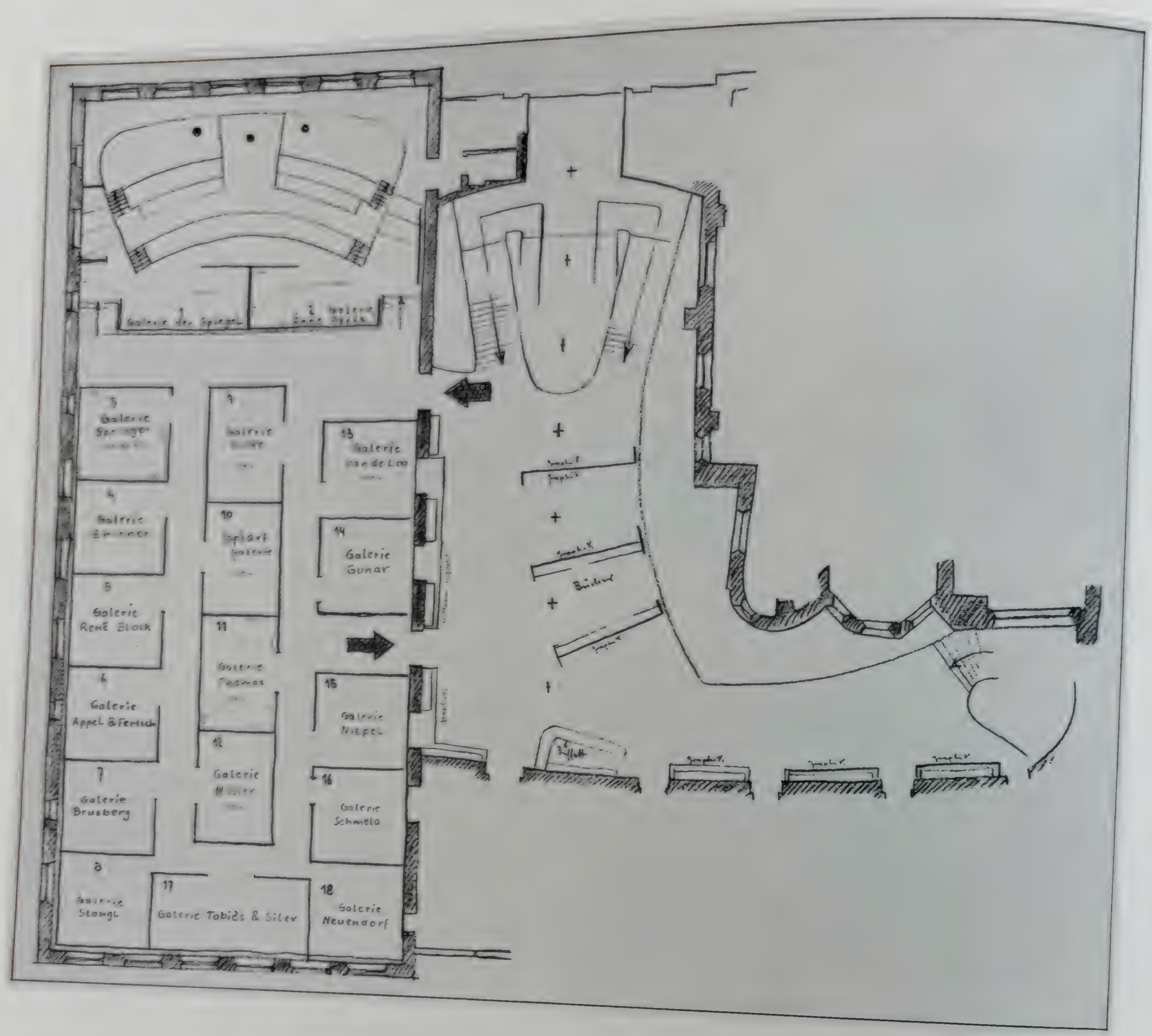
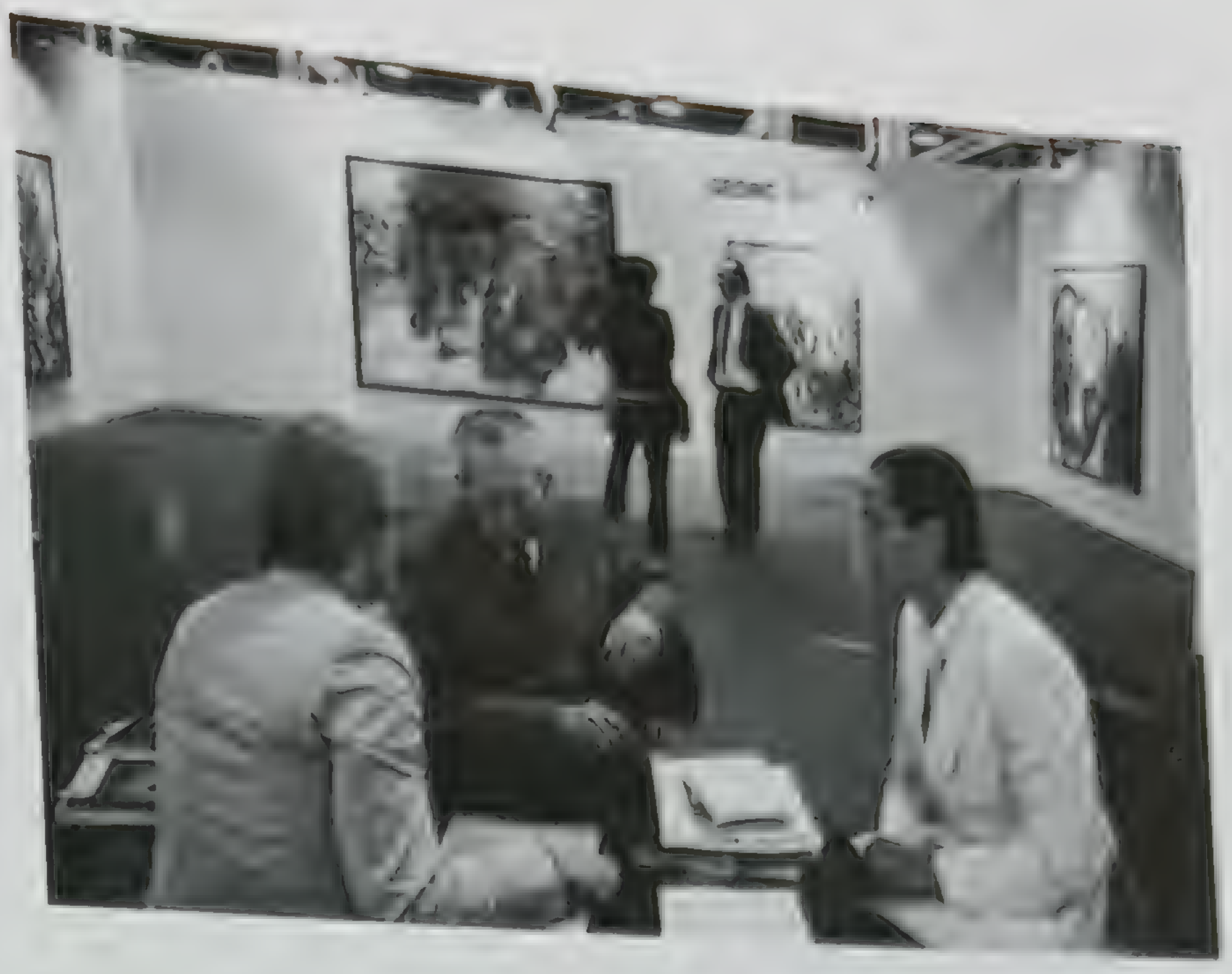

1 Galerie der Spiegel
2
3 Galerie
4 Galerie
5 Galerie René Block
6 Galerie Appel & Fertsch
7 Galerie Brusberg
8 Galerie Stangl
9 Galerie
10
11 Galerie Thomas
12 Galerie
13 Galerie van de Loo
14 Galerie Gunar
15 Galerie Niepel
16 Galerie Schmela
17 Galerie Tobiès & Silex
18 Galerie Neuendorf
Büfett

Fig. 56 Ground plan for Kunstmarkt 67, Gürzenich, Cologne, 13 September–8 October 1967, as shown in *Kunstmarkt 67*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Verein Progressiver Kunsthändler, 1967)

of twenty-four galleries.[73] Ever in competition with Cologne, Düsseldorf countered with its own fair, Prospect: An International Preview of the Art in Avant-Garde Galleries, organized for the first time in 1968 by the dealer Konrad Fischer and the critic Hans Strelow. In contrast to the focus on German galleries by their colleagues in Cologne, Fischer and Strelow appointed an international jury to invite dealers from all over the world to exhibit; in fact, only one German gallery was invited.[74] Other cities quickly followed suit, with yearly art fairs taking place in Berlin beginning in 1969, as well as in smaller cities like Göttingen, and in metropolitan centers across Europe such as Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels and Basel (whose contemporary art fair, established in 1970, is the most important in Europe today). Aided by Peter Ludwig's permanent loan of extensive holdings from his contemporary art collection to the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne quickly rose to the position of art capital of Germany, and galleries flocked to the Rhine area. Galeriehaus Köln, the first building in Germany to house a group of German galleries under one roof, opened in 1971 at Lindenstrasse 18–22.[75]

The public and commercial success of the Cologne art fairs exceeded all expectations and was due to a number of factors. Intense publicity, if not always positive, had proven effective. Heated debates, even a lawsuit, concerning the exclusion of certain dealers and artists, the definition of "progressive" dealers and "contemporary" art, and the use of municipal buildings for commercial purposes both preceded and accompanied the early Cologne fairs.[76] The Gürzenich, a medieval building that had been used for formal occasions throughout its history and was the location of the first art fair, piqued public curiosity and lent historical legitimacy to the new enterprise.[77] The fairs also created an atmosphere that stimulated buying and was much discussed. The distanced, exquisite display found in gallery showrooms was replaced by a hands-on exhibition in which artworks were presented as commodities, like "foods, furniture, or industrial products," as one



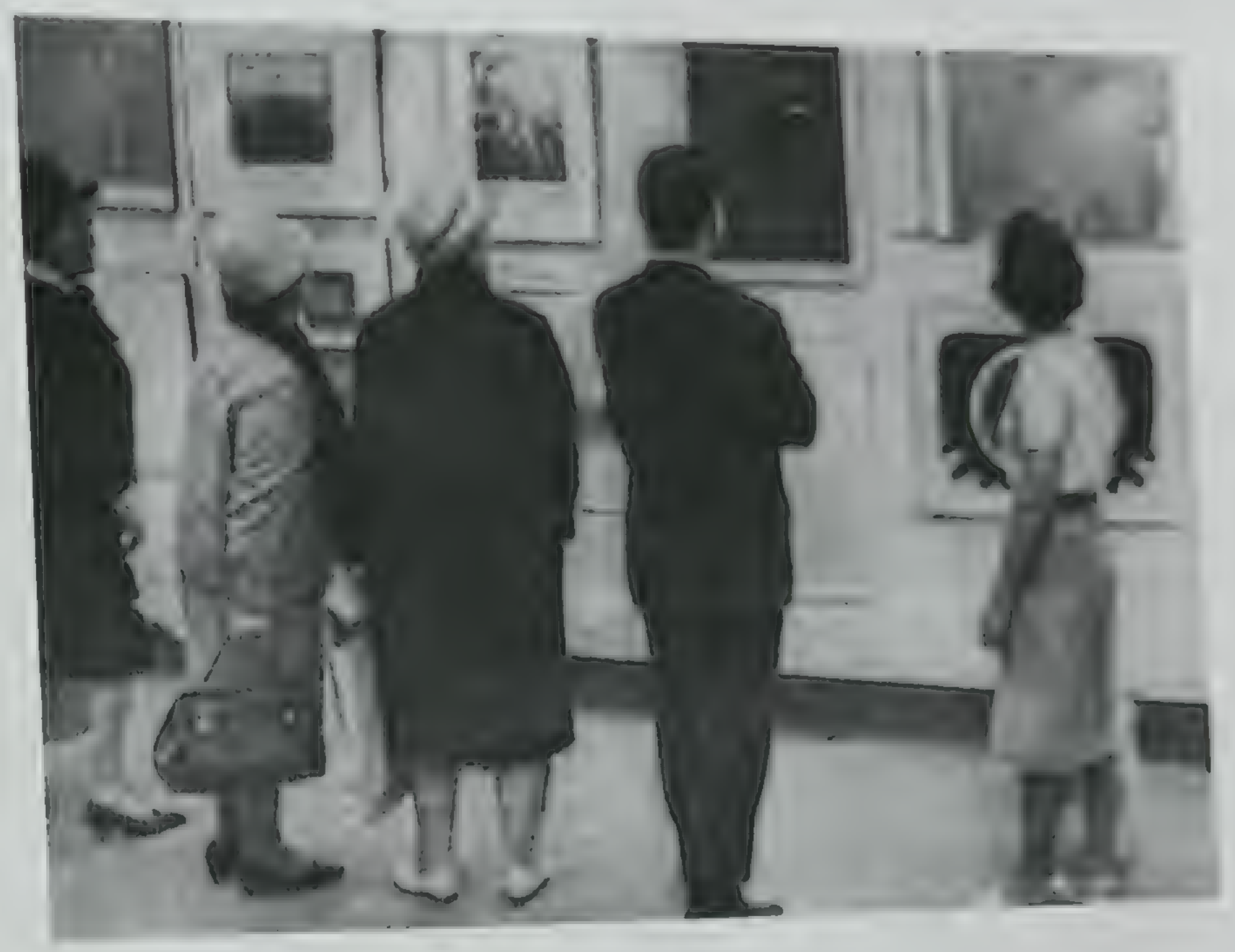


Fig. 57 Booth of Galerie Heiner Friedrich at KKM 71, with (from left to right) Heiner Friedrich, Karl Ströher, and Franz Dahlem, 1971. Photograph. © 2007 Angelika Platen, Berlin.

Fig. 58 Kaufhof Galerie, Munich, 1966, from *Der Spiegel*, 24 October 1966, 158

critic wrote, organized on the *Kaufhausprinzip*, or "department-store principle."[78] The booths were spatially arranged, rather like a strip mall, and they were crammed with works, offering visitors the chance to compare and select among them as they would with other commodities (fig. 56). Art was not only hung on the walls, it was placed on tables and into flip stands and drawers, creating a sense of discovery and participation for visitors and not only allowing but requiring them to handle it.[79] As the co-founder of the Cologne art fair, Hein Stünke, described it, "The audience of an art fair is more lively. They do not simply stand and view the works, they have the possibility of handling these things, to take a print in their hands, or to play with an object. This is the advantage of the fair and makes it attractive."[80] Moreover, dealing and selling became visible, public activities. Especially during the early fairs, visitors had the chance to meet artists and dealers, and sales talks did not take place behind closed doors. On the contrary, clients saw other clients buying and were thus encouraged to buy as well (fig. 57).

The understanding of art as commodity was most blatant in places where art mingled with everyday retail items and attracted ordinary shoppers off the streets. Following precedents in the United States, Japan, Paris, and prewar Berlin, some German department stores began showing and selling contemporary art alongside regular merchandise (fig. 58). A Munich department store reportedly showed modern art as early as 1964, and the national chain Kaufhof sold editions by contemporary artists starting around 1966. When Kaufhof reopened its Düsseldorf branch in 1968, it hosted the Galerie Denise René/Hans Mayer, showing and selling prints by contemporary artists such as Karl Gerstner and Heinz Mack in the so-called art salon for a period of two weeks. And in late 1969, the Schneider chain opened a gallery for contemporary art on the fourth floor of its Karlsruhe branch, hosting solo exhibitions of young artists and selling prints of artworks.[81] Related collaborations between retailers and art

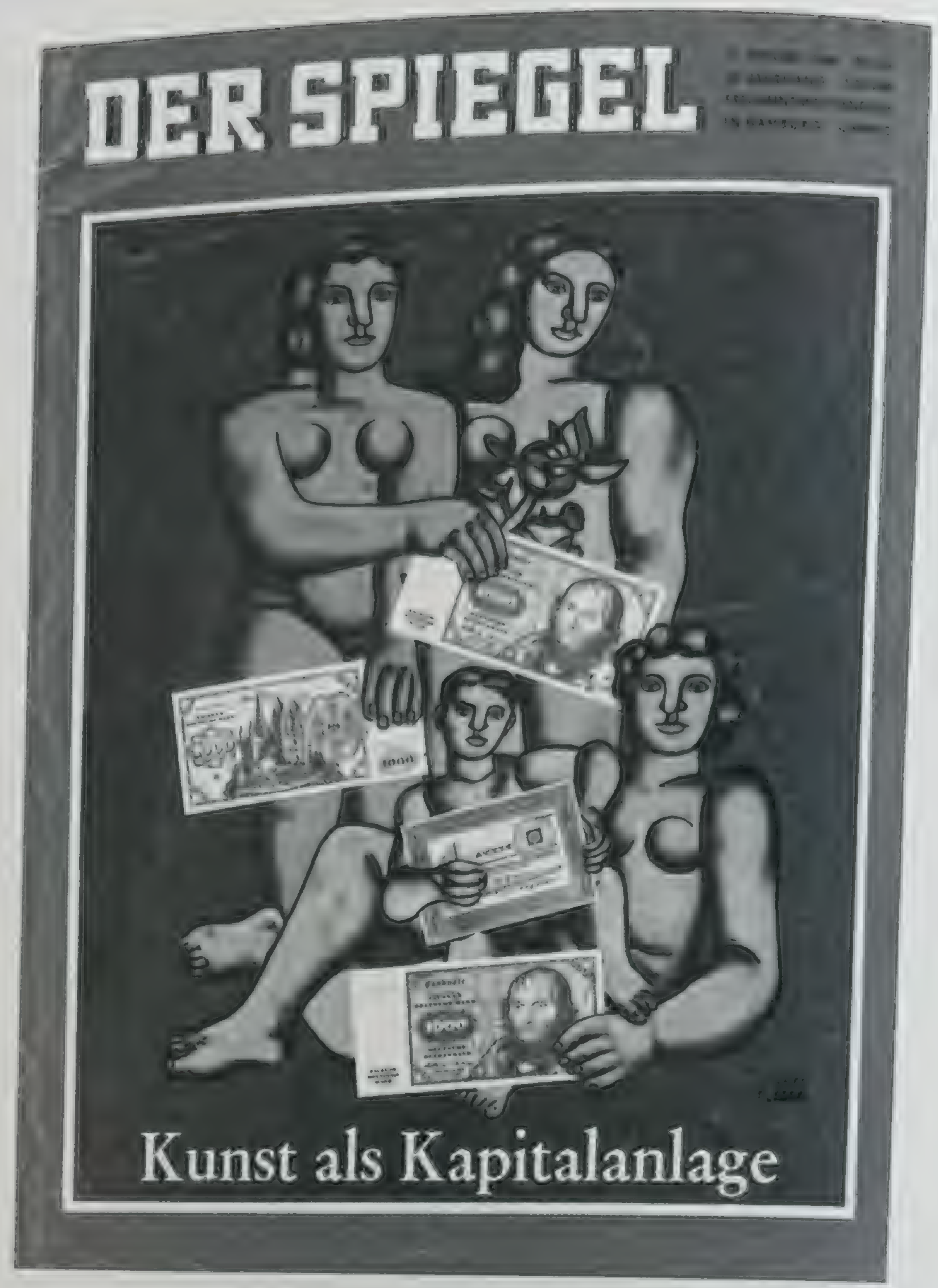


Fig. 59 "Kunst als Kapitalanlage" (Art as Investment), cover of *Der Spiegel*, 24 October 1966

dealers in Cologne included the 1967 opening of Ingo Kuemmel's first gallery in a liquor store and his subsequent sale of art at the local produce market, and, most prominent, the alliance of around forty downtown shops that displayed art in their storefronts yearly from 1969 on by, among others, Joseph Beuys, Konrad Klapheck, Roy Lichtenstein, Ansgar Nierhoff, and Andy Warhol.[82]

With an awakened public interest, and following the temporary economic recession of 1966–67, art was increasingly thought of as a form of investment that was immune to inflation.[83] A milestone in this development was *Kunstkompass* (Art Compass), an annual ranking of artists established in October 1970 by Willi Bongard, a former *Zeit* journalist who had spent two years in the United States researching the relation between art and commerce. Published in the economics journal *Das Capital* and circulated initially also as an independent newsletter available for subscription entitled *Art Aktuell* (Art Courant), Bongard's *Kunstkompass*, as one writer claimed facetiously, had the potential to become the "most discussed contribution to art criticism of the year."[84] The publication ranked artists according to reputation based on a point system that calculated their representation in important museum collections, international exhibitions, and art literature. The ranking was juxtaposed with current average prices, allowing readers to determine which artists, for example, were still relatively inexpensive in relation to their reputation.[85] By the mid-1970s, art investment funds and organizations had been formed, and at the end of the decade corporate collecting took off.[86]

The widespread interest triggered by this art market led to a publication boom, including books, such as Bongard's *Kunst und Kommerz* (Art and Commerce, 1967); complete journal issues, such as the March 1971 *Das Kunstwerk* devoted to "Art as Commodity" and a 1966 issue of the news magazine *Der Spiegel* on "Art as Investment" (fig. 59); and numerous articles, most notably regular reviews of all the art fairs by art magazines. National newspapers like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Die Zeit*, and *Das Handelsblatt* covered these fairs as well and began to publish weekly art market pages or columns.[87] This wide coverage engendered a new, commercial vocabulary in the art world: clients were *Kunstkonsumenten* (art consumers), artworks were *Kunstaktien* (art stocks), and reviewers began interlarding their criticism with retail terms such as *Räumungsverkauf* (clearance sale), *Schick der nächsten Saison* (next season's fashion), and *neues Sortiment* (new assortment).[88]

ART OFF THE RACK

Inevitably, the growing market presence shaped the art being created, most notably through the spread of an art form known as the "multiple," a term that gained currency in Europe in 1966 after the dealer Denise René had begun to use it to refer to editioned works by her artists. As commonly understood during the sixties and early seventies, a multiple was an art object conceptualized as part of a series. As opposed to traditional printing or casting, multiples were not created from originals or artists' proofs but were a series of identical works each of equal importance: they were "multiplied original works," as it were.[89] Eventually in many cases meant to be manufactured, though they rarely were, multiples bore many affinities with industrial manufacture. Artists produced them in great quantities and often delegated aspects of the labor to specialists. They frequently employed industrial materials such as plastic or metal, and even used industrial products, ranging from motors, lights, and mirrors to electric toothbrushes, hammers, and pickled herring.[90] Produced in editions, multiples could be marketed to a large group of potential buyers through magazine advertisements and mail order catalogues. And with production costs distributed among objects, the prices for multiples could be fixed and were more affordable than those of one-of-a-kind paintings and sculptures.

Of course, multiples were not new when they were first named as such; they had been in existence in principle for almost fifty years. Marcel Duchamp was consistently cited as a forefather of the multiples: his *Pharmacy* (1914) had appeared in an edition of three and *Rotoreliefs* (1935) in an edition of five hundred, and the ready-mades became available in larger editions during the early sixties. Duchamp subsequently contributed his *Rotoreliefs* to the first programmatic edition of multiples, put together in 1959–60 by the Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri under the label *Edition MAT*, short for *Multiplication d'art transformable.*[91] Fifteen artists, including Heinz Mack, Dieter Rot, and Jean Tinguely, contributed to the first *MAT* edition. Spoerri himself produced their objects, which were all transformable, either by a motor or by the viewer. In accordance with the principle of transformation and participation, the objects were conceived as multiples in an edition of a hundred all sold for the same price, and were intended for wide distribution through a sales catalogue. A few years later, the Swiss artist Karl Gerstner persuaded Spoerri to revive the idea and the two published the second *MAT* edition in 1964. Significant changes were made. Production and distribution was now in the hands of Hein Stünke's Galerie Der Spiegel, and sales were not made through a catalogue. The idea of transformation was replaced by the more vague principle of "originals in series," and the prices of the multiples differed. Following his purchase of the rights to the name from Spoerri, Stünke produced the *Edition MAT* by himself beginning in 1965.[92]

The history of *MAT* mirrors the development of the multiple during the 1960s from an artistic concept to a market strategy. The earliest examples of multiples systematically called into question the role of the artist. As in the case of Duchamp or the early *MAT*, they insisted on an inherently democratic character: making art available at a low price to a large number of people. The key was participation. Some artists, like Robert Filliou and Dieter Rot, chiefly made multiples, while others, like Joseph Beuys, made the idea of the multiple the core of their work. "All those people who have such an object will continue to be interested in how the point of departure from which the vehicle started is developing," Beuys believed; "That way I stay in touch with people. . . . There are also cross-connections between people. . . . I'm interested in the distribution of physical vehicles in the form of editions because I'm interested in spreading ideas."[93]

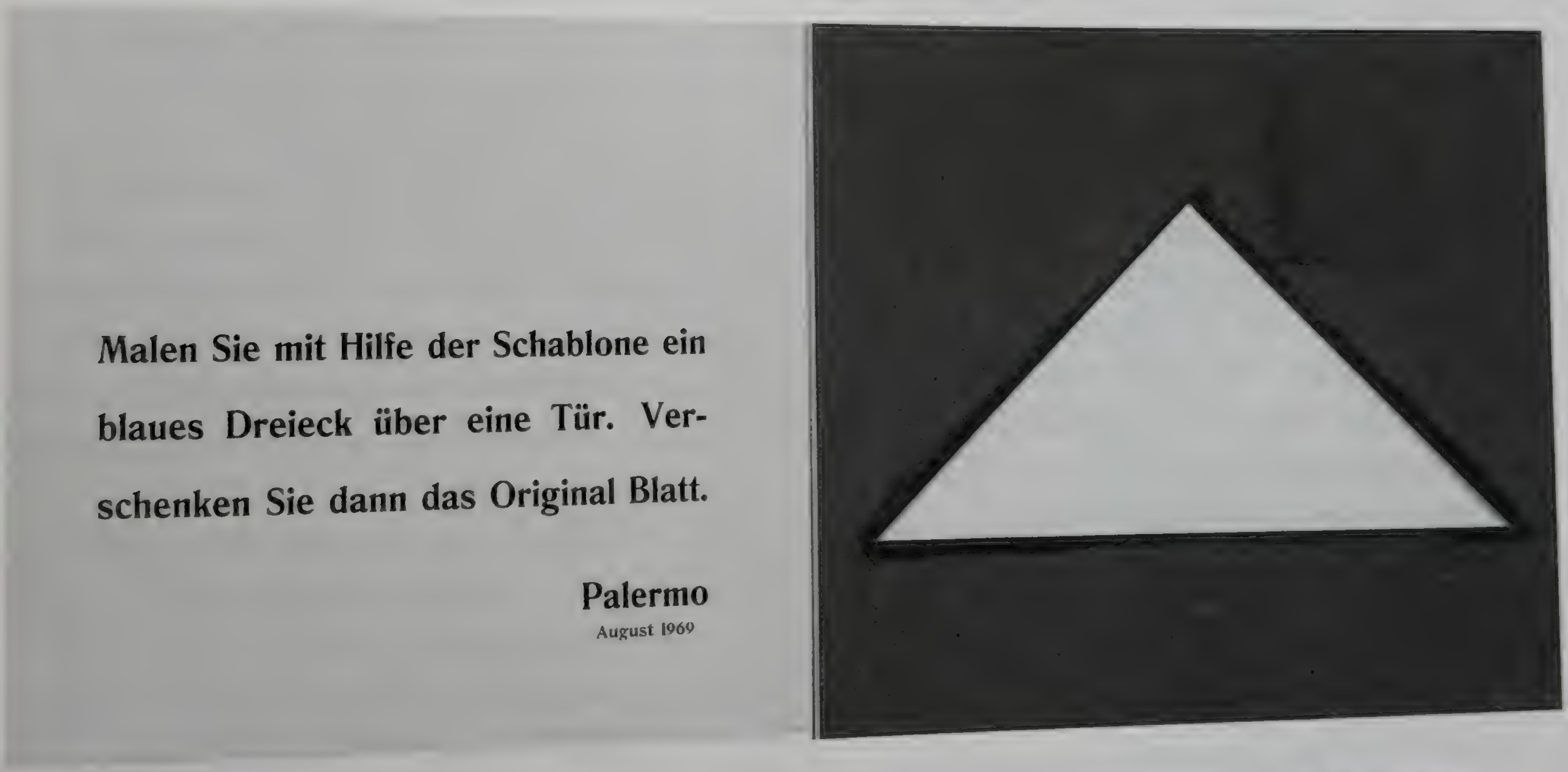
Yet the multiple, originally distributed in alternative venues, increasingly became a successful market strategy for companies and dealers. During the early 1960s, various companies collaborated with artists on multiple editions: the Italian furniture maker Danese joined forces with Enzo Mari and Bruno Munari, the German porcelain company Rosenthal with Victor Vasarely and Lucio Fontana, and the Dutch electronics company Phillips with Nicolas Schoeffer. The Galerie Denise René/Hans Mayer sold some of its multiples through department stores and in 1973 even produced a Gerstner multiple as a promotional gift to doctors and apothecaries for the Swiss company Hoffmann La Roche.[94] In addition, multiples flooded the German art market during the late sixties and early seventies and became extremely popular. Exhibitions devoted to multiples were mounted; in Germany, these included *ars multiplicata* (1968) at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum —which showed prints from the 1950s and 1960s as well as *MAT* and pop multiples—and *Multiples* (1974) at the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein.[95] Following the model of the Galerie Der Spiegel, dealers like Heiner Friedrich and René Block operated secondary businesses as publishers of editions. Multiples were common at the art fairs, and soon they even had their own fair, the Fachmesse für Multiplizierte Kunst (Trade Fair for Multiplied Art), first held in Berlin in 1972.

What made multiples so attractive to businesses? At the dawn of concept- or environment-based art, multiples became a marketable stand-in for art that was otherwise difficult to sell, comparable, for example, to the prints Palermo made in conjunction with his wall paintings. The characteristics that served to undermine the traditional concept of authorship and to democratize art also made the multiple a natural for the growing art market. Affordable prices allowed dealers to offer art by well-known artists to lower-income and first-time collectors, and art by young, little-known artists to established collectors who were unwilling to take financial risks on more expensive one-of-a-kind works.[96] At the same time, market interests limited the essential aspect of the multiple: its availability. Most multiples were still relatively expensive, ranging from 300 to 2,000 DM, with prices often going up when a multiple was about to sell out.[97] The sizes of editions usually remained limited as well, often not exceeding fifty works, replacing the aura of the original with what Siegfried Neuenhausen aptly called the "aura of small editions."[98] As René Block pointed out, "It is more profitable to produce an expensive multiple in a small edition than it is to produce a large edition which can't be sold in spite of the low price. Besides that, a large edition often presents the problem of warehouse fees."[99]

It is doubtful that multiples ever constituted a principal source of revenue for any of these dealers, but the medium was highly visible on the art market and, in turn, embodied the strong market presence in the German art world of the late sixties. Klaus Jürgen-Fischer dismissively labeled multiples *Kunst von der Stange*, "art off the rack,"[100] a description that could be applied to Palermo's cloth pictures, made of fashionable fabric straight from the textile industry. The relation of the cloth pictures to the multiples will become clearer if we look at a closely related multiple that Palermo produced in 1969.

PALERMO ON THE MARKET

Curiously, the Palermo literature ignores or mentions only in passing the most interesting example of Palermo's print oeuvre, a multiple published by the Galerie Block, Berlin, that comments wittily on its



Malen Sie mit Hilfe der Schablone ein blaues Dreieck über eine Tür. Verschenken Sie dann das Original Blatt.

Palermo
August 1969

Fig. 60 *Blaues Dreieck* (Blue Triangle), 1969. Multiple object in edition of fifty, cardboard stencil, brush, and blue paint in cardboard box, with one painted original and paper with text "Use the stencil to paint a blue triangle over the door. Then give away the original." Stencil and paper with text: each 48.5 x 54 cm.

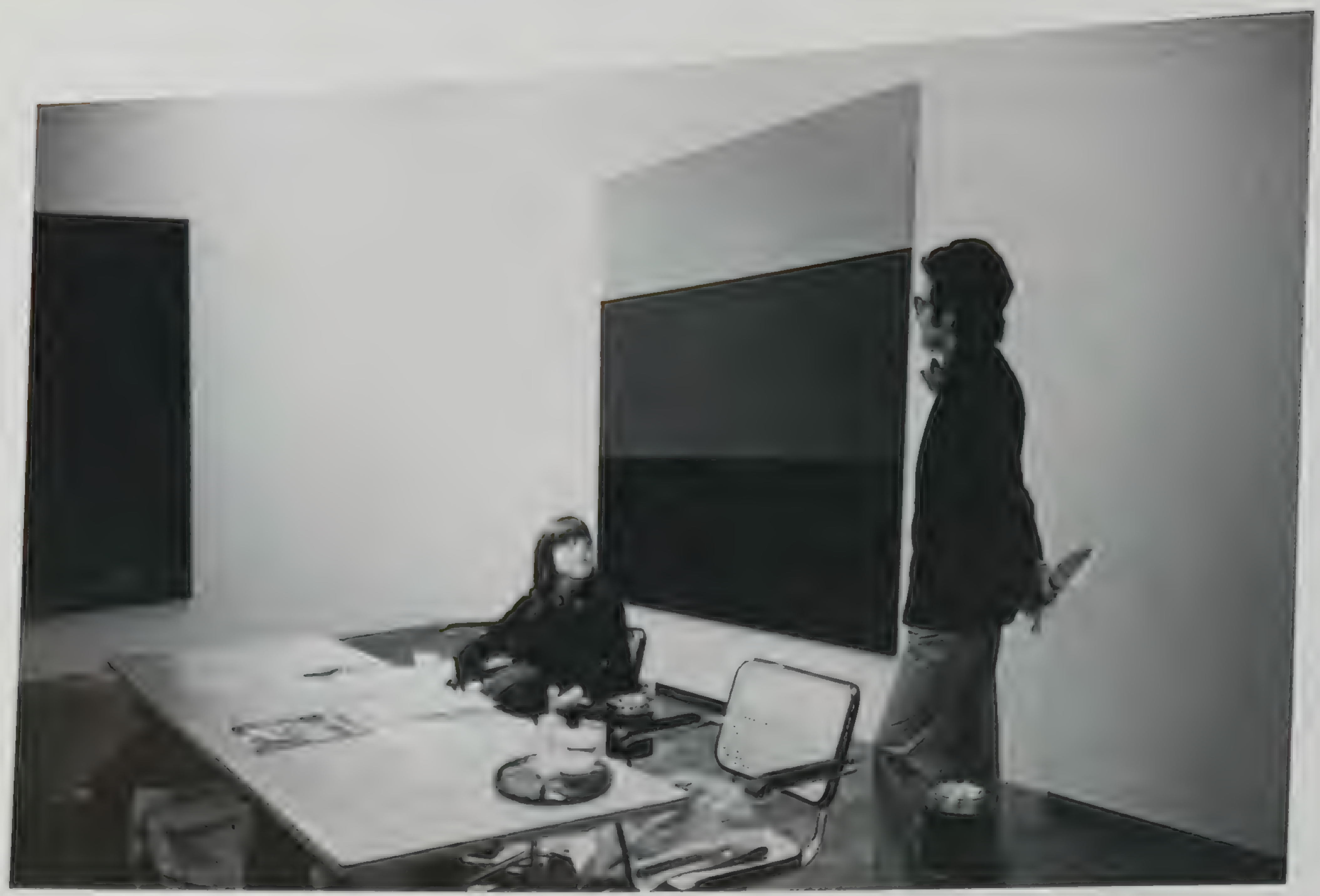


Fig. 61 Barbara Schiller and unidentified person at booth of Galerie Heiner Friedrich with *Triptychon* in the background, Kölner Kunstmarkt 72, Cologne, 3–8 October 1972

own position within the art market.[101] Each version of the 1969 *Blaues Dreieck* edition of fifty was presented packed in a cardboard box that contained an original sample print by Palermo along with a do-it-yourself kit: a stencil, a paintbrush, and a tube of blue paint (fig. 60, see also fig. 135). The buyer was instructed to "use the stencil to paint a blue triangle over the door. Then give away the original"; a photograph showed the triangle being painted.[102] The project intricately plays with conventional definitions of *art* and *artist,* and it comments on the rising art market. The original is transformed from a commodity into a gift—"give away the original"—while another part of the artwork, the triangle that the buyer paints above the door, is fixed into place and cannot circulate. And it is the buyer, rather than the artist, who completes the work. At the same time that the identification of the artist is being challenged, the distinction between original and copy is confused and complicated: Is the print that comes in the kit an original work or a sample, part of the instructions? Is the triangle painted above the door a copy or the work of art itself? And the tools for making the object—stencil, paint, and brush—become part of the object itself: Is the kit the artwork? Finally, standardized production (the stencil) and division of labor (between the artist and the buyer) replace the work of the artist's hand.[103]

The cloth pictures follow the logic of multiples in their large quantity (over sixty), their endless variation, their constant reuse of certain colors and structures, their semi-mechanical making and delegation of labor, and their industrial materials. Further, the way they were listed in art fair catalogues played down individual differences; rather than listing single pieces, the advertisements identified them as cloth pictures, "each" two by two meters. Some curators and Palermo's friends alike contend that Palermo's cloth pictures were produced mainly for the market. In 1972, Storck cautioned, "One must not limit Palermo to his cloth pictures, which are mainly meant to be sold," making an implied contrast between these "commodities" and the roughly contemporaneous wall paintings, the "artworks." The art historian and conservator Pia Gottschaller summarized her conversations with (unidentified) friends of Palermo: "Even [they] feel that Palermo went a little overboard exploiting the 'saleability' of the pictures." And, indeed, unlike the wall paintings, the cloth pictures sold extremely well.[104] They also regularly represented Palermo at the fairs, alongside the blue triangle multiple and editions related to his wall paintings. One of the first public appearances of a

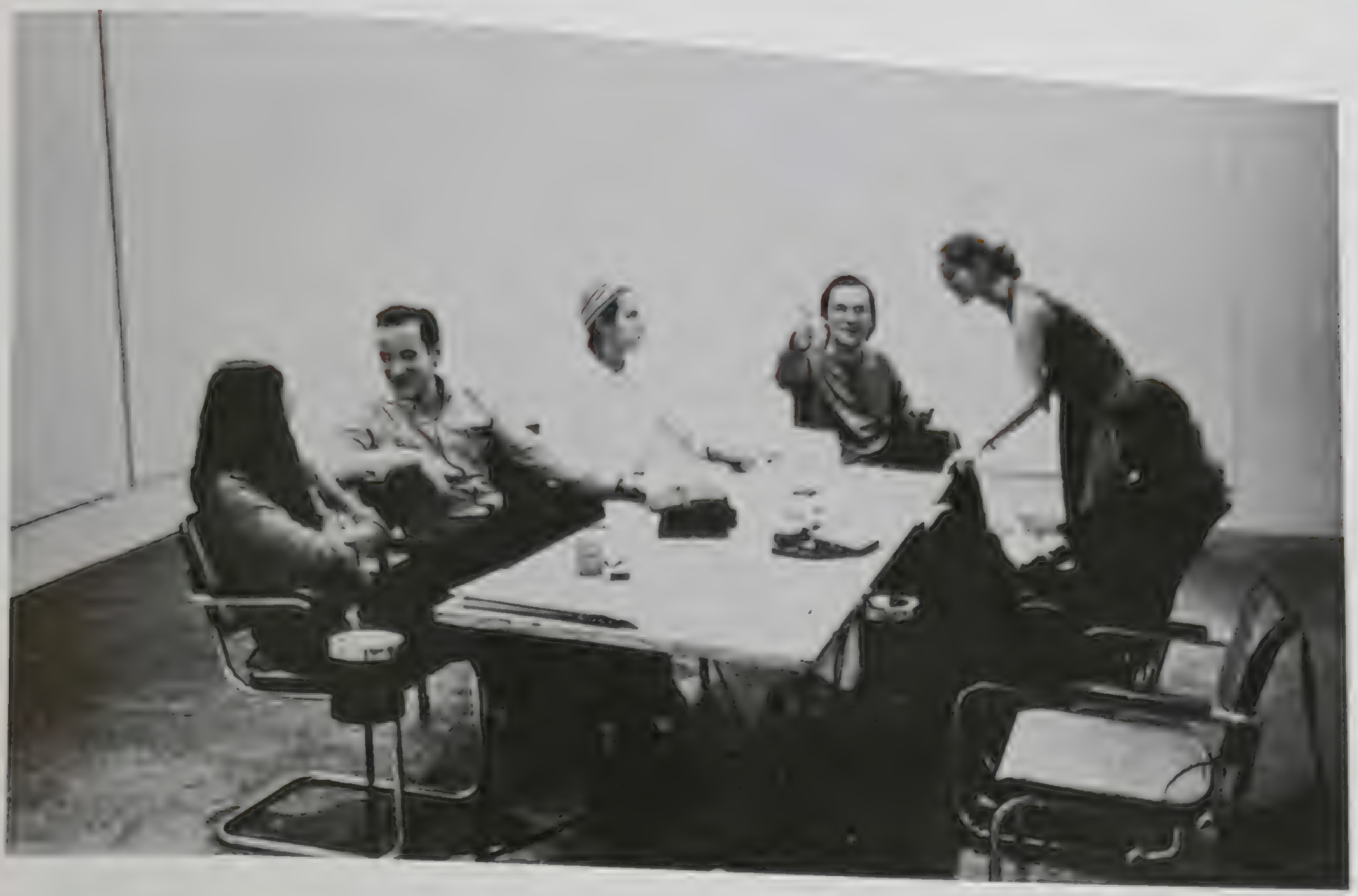


Fig. 62 Barbara Schiller, Palermo, Franz Dahlem, Imi Knoebel, Thordis Moeller, and an unidentified woman at the booth of Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Kölner Kunstmarkt 72, Cologne, 3–8 October 1972. Photograph. © 2007 Timm Rautert, Essen.

cloth picture was the white monochrome (see fig. 49) in the *Demonstrative 67* exhibition that Heiner Friedrich and his artists staged at the DuMont publishing house to protest the gallery's exclusion from the first Cologne art fair. As if to close the circle around this body of work, Palermo chose the last cloth picture, *Triptychon* (see fig. 40), as the centerpiece of a special, one-day Palermo installation for Friedrich's gallery booth at the 1972 Cologne art fair (fig. 61). The triptych's serial nature, color scaling effect, and standard primary color palette (red, yellow, and blue) display a more obvious commercial sensibility than previous cloth pictures, and Thordis Moeller reports that Palermo made it specifically for this occasion.[105]

The conceptual explicitness with which the blue triangle multiple addresses the art market is absent in the cloth pictures and represents an exception in Palermo's art. Perhaps this is because it presented somewhat of a dead end. What is left for a painter to do after handing over to his collectors what he himself wanted to do? Unlike conceptual painters, Palermo was passionately committed to painting, and rather than accepting the endlessly recurring contention that painting had ended, he opened up abstract painting to those very historical conditions addressed in the blue triangle multiple: to make abstract pictures that in their form, in their making, and in their materials were fundamentally connected to the growing German art market.

Palermo's engagement, both artistically and commercially, with the market does not mean that he made the cloth pictures merely for profit, as a means of supporting himself while working on the wall paintings that were by their nature impossible to "sell." Rather, the relation between cloth pictures and the art market partly stems from and reflects the fact that, unlike many of his peers, Palermo was never antagonistic to or critical of the market as such. Rather, his attitude toward it was open, grateful, and playful. By the same token, he viewed Fischer and especially Friedrich not simply as dealers but also as friends. Fischer had been a fellow student at the Düsseldorf art academy before opening his gallery; Friedrich socialized with Palermo and various other artists, sharing an evening at a bar or at home watching soccer. As Richter observed, "They really had a special relationship." We can also be fairly certain that Palermo appreciated the financial security that came with his contract with Friedrich, signed around December 1970. It provided Palermo with a monthly salary and Friedrich with a steady number of paintings a month. Palermo did not object to the fairs; his signature is notably absent on a pamphlet protesting the exclusivity of the Cologne fair drafted by Beuys, Erwin Heerich, and Klaus Staeck. Instead, Palermo hung around his dealer's booth (fig. 62) and even protested Friedrich's exclusion from the first art fair.[106] While his art did not make it onto the first bestseller lists prepared by Bongard, Palermo's prices did pick up in the course of the seventies and his work was even the subject of a feature in one of the first issues of the Cologne art fair magazine.[107]

THE TACKED-UP CANVAS

Palermo's cloth pictures speak to the pervasiveness of the market; they display their marketability and seek out the market. Furthermore, they dwell on the possibilities of the market, its pressures and pleasures. But as much as Palermo's cloth pictures seem to immerse themselves in the world of commerce, they never do only that. To an equal degree, they enact the central rhetoric of modernism: reducing a medium, in this case painting, to its essence. This discourse has a long and complicated history. From the "pure plastic" rhetoric of De Stijl to the analytic treatises of unism to Clement Greenberg's propagation of modernist purity, recourses to the inherent and irreducible properties of the medium have repeatedly functioned as defenses and motivations for abstract painting. The absolutism of this discourse is full of slippages and paradoxes, and Palermo's cloth pictures touch on them all.[108]

Palermo's artist friend Ulrich Rückriem remembers that Palermo was interested in "a diminished amount of decision making," a statement that echoes modernist efforts to reduce both the medium's constitutive elements and the decisions made in the process of creating a work of art.[109] Moreover, the clarity with which the cloth pictures fit into the discourse of medium-specific painting and take on its problems attests to Palermo's familiarity with both its prewar European and postwar American formulations. He had had plenty of opportunities to become familiar with the work and perhaps even the discourse surrounding modernist art. He traveled to Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum with its extensive collection of suprematist paintings by Kasimir Malevich and visited exhibitions surveying the work of Morris Louis and the American color-field painters.[110] Moreover, Palermo browsed through and might have read at least some of the magazines in the Düsseldorf academy library; he probably kept up with the German art magazine *Das Kunstwerk* and the Swiss journal *Art International;* and he even pasted the cover of the 1965 *Das Kunstwerk* issue on new abstraction onto the center of one of his lost, perhaps later destroyed, paintings, *Neue Abstraktion* (see fig. 107). In *Art International,* Palermo would have found not only general information about current American art but the New York letters by Greenberg's protégé Michael Fried that laid out some of the basic premises of American modernist painting in great detail. Greenberg and Fried's willingness to pass judgments of taste would have appealed to Palermo, who once explained quality to high school students in a strikingly uncompromising manner: "One can paint a square well, and one can paint it badly. There is a difference. To paint a square well is just as hard as, say, to paint a head well. When a square is made well, it's simply done well, and if it's done badly, it's simply bad. One can see that when holding them next to one another." But perhaps Palermo gathered further nuances from the writings of these American critics.[111]

The cloth pictures have occasionally been labeled pure and essential, and in a way they are.[112] To begin with, they have a sense of wholeness, often remarked upon in terms of their clarity, classicism, serenity, or harmony.[113] The reviewer of Palermo's first "pure" cloth picture exhibition at Galerie Konrad Fischer, for example, remarked on the way in which "the differently colored bands of fabric seem to correspond to one another. . . . [They make] a harmonic composition even when based on contrasts."[114] Even Palermo's most ironic peer, Polke, picked up on this. "With regard to the sewn-together fabrics, one has to say that they are chords. Palermo was someone who liked music very much. . . . The musical ambitions justify sewing together brown

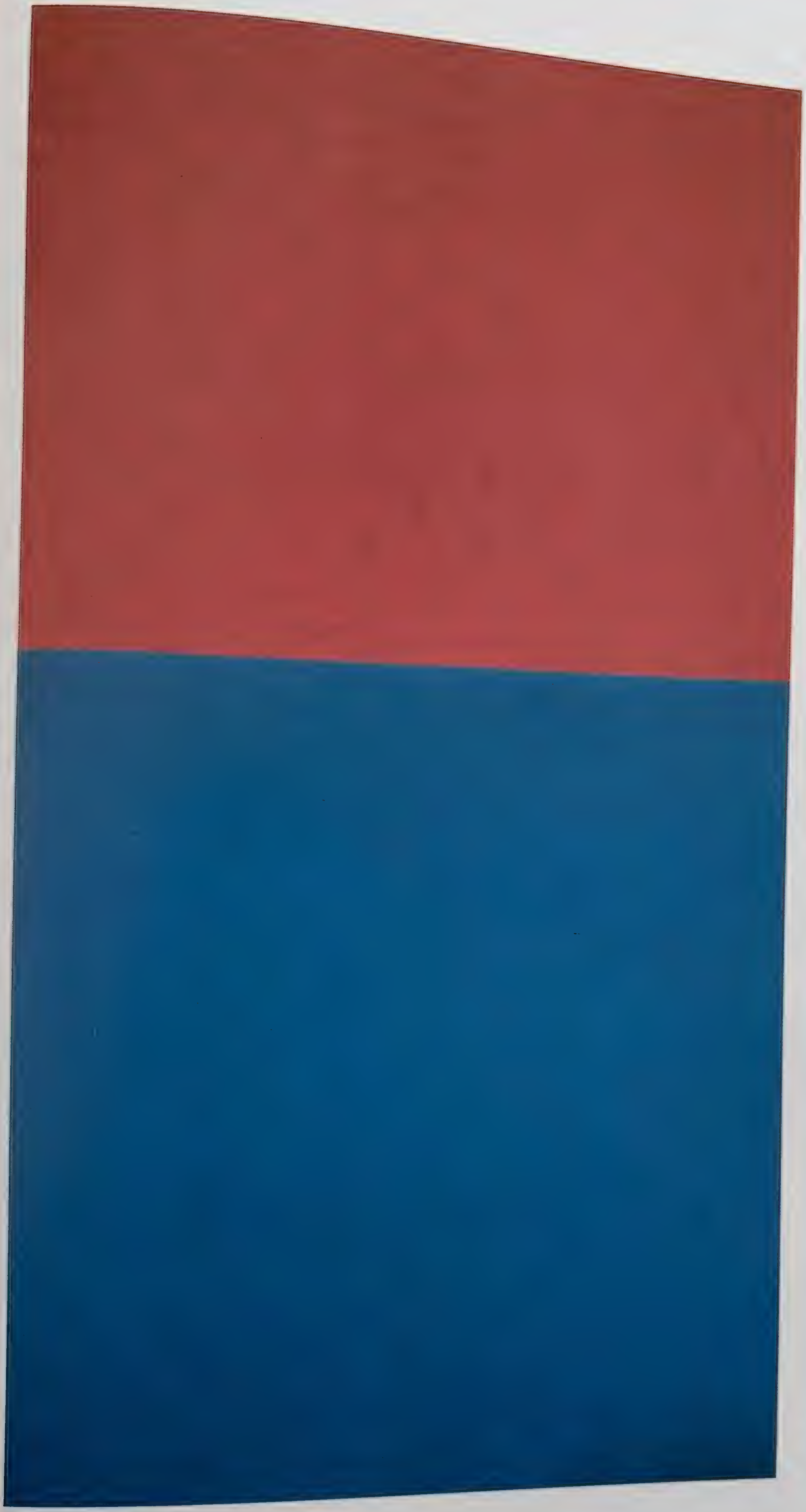


Fig. 63 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 54), 1967. Cotton, 95 x 50 cm. Collection of Vera Munro, Hamburg.

with green because everyone says, oh no, these dark color tones, like a military green. . . . But if you follow them, they are like zones of calm, the pictures weren't legends, weren't stories. In a room with Palermo, there was silence at first."[115] The theme of wholeness and division is central to Bernhart Schwenk's work on Palermo in general and on the cloth pictures in particular; he claims that they make us see "wholeness without feeling unity" and thus cause a "disturbing fascination." This suggestion of a nonexistent unity of content by means of wholeness of form defines Palermo's work for Schwenk as a "hope for a desired state."[116] I would consider the wholeness of the cloth pictures instead as a crucial aspect of the essentialist conception of painting, for a sense of wholeness asserts the self-containment of a painting on the one hand and prevents any dynamic interaction of parts that could suggest movement or anthropomorphism on the other.

The perfect square format and the overall texture of the cotton are the most basic guarantors of this sense of totality. It was also effected by Palermo's switch from a vertical to a horizontal division in his cloth pictures, which probably occurred in late 1966. A vertically divided picture, especially in large, life-size dimensions, tends to split the viewer's binary vision, with the left eye pulling to the left and the right eye to the right. A picture with a horizontal division, by contrast, can be apprehended at once. Above all, Palermo's color choices, carefully tested in experiments with actual colors and proportions on the floor—rather than in sketches—unify the cloth pictures. Cloth pictures with different colors hold together because they have the same value, that is, the same amount of light (fig. 63), or because they have the same degree of purity or intensity (see fig. 42). In other cloth pictures, a single color is presented in different gradations and values (see fig. 45).[117] Storck located a crisis in the restrained palette of this last type of cloth picture, many examples of which date from around late 1969; he believed that their rejection of color returned Palermo too closely to concerns with objectness and materiality that had been dominant in the objects but that Palermo had sought to counterbalance in the cloth pictures with intense colors.[118] While I agree with Storck that the cloth pictures facilitated Palermo's departure from and transformation of his objects, the reserved palette of some cloth pictures need not represent a crisis. Given that other cloth pictures made at other points in Palermo's production display a restrained color feel, these works may rather present us with a different emphasis of concerns: the "market" qualities are subdued, though not given up entirely, in favor of the essentialist qualities.[119] Palermo's monochrome cloth pictures, in particular, shift the emphasis to the latter. We could also reasonably speculate that when Palermo destroyed the large group of cloth pictures following the "pop party," it may have had something to do with a sense of lost equilibrium, with popular concerns taking over those of painting. Palermo's works were always a balancing act.

More important, there is the flatness of the cloth pictures, perhaps the most prevalent trope within the essentialist discourse of painting. Its fiercest advocate, Clement Greenberg, asserted, "Flatness and the delimitation of flatness . . . is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture: thus, a stretched or tacked-up canvas already exists as a picture—though not necessarily as a successful one."[120] In making stretched canvases that were successful modernist pictures, Palermo proved the truth of the first part of Greenberg's statement but disproved the wariness of the second. The cloth pictures reduce abstract painting to a radical flatness. Any distinction between color and support that could potentially deny this flatness by opening up a space, however shallow, is absent. In Palermo's cloth pictures, color, in the form of an industrially applied dye, is identical with the surface of the picture, much like in the manual staining technique that Greenberg and Fried celebrated in the paintings of Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko. Many of these artists had combined staining with exposed raw canvas. Pollock used commercially dyed sienna red fabric as a ground for four drip paintings between 1948 and 1949, attesting to its visual and conceptual proximity to staining.[121] Fried's classic description of the technique in his *Three American Painters*—the seminal exhibition catalogue celebrating the color-field painters Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, and Frank Stella—accepts "raw canvas" and even mechanical reproduction, if only by analogy. His words almost seamlessly apply to Palermo's cloth pictures, although he had Louis's paintings in mind: "The stain technique identifies the painted image with its woven canvas ground, almost as if the image were thrown onto the latter from a slide-projector. The actual weave of the canvas shows through everywhere . . . the stain image and its raw canvas ground are indissoluble one from the other. In fact, the stain image may be regarded as nothing more than the ground itself under different conditions of seeing, and vice-versa." The same is true for Greenberg's description of Louis's technique: "The fabric, being soaked in paint rather than merely covered by it, becomes paint in itself, color in itself, like dyed cloth: the threadedness and wovenness are in the color."[122] By switching to cotton sometime in 1967, Palermo attained utter matteness, avoiding the reflections on the shiny satin fabrics he had previously used, reflections that created gradations of color and allusive, shallow spaces. Flatness, in this sense, is bound up closely with isolating color, its maximum purity and intensity, as an essential element of painting, a theme often alluded to in reviews of the cloth pictures.[123]

Greenberg himself was well aware of the dangers of flatness, as his skepticism about the "success" of a tacked-up canvas suggests. Many postwar painters have made such ambivalences and problems their project, most importantly Robert Ryman, in whom Palermo and Richter took great interest and whom they visited.[124] But Palermo's cloth pictures give the problem a fresh twist in that they reduce painting to its proper ground (the tacked-up canvas), and even purify color (the identity of dye and ground), while abandoning paint (strictly speaking) altogether. In their stead, the cloth pictures posit sewing and dyeing as appropriate, medium-specific means of treating the fabric that forms the ground of painting. For Palermo, modernist essentialism does not mean closing down possibilities.[125]

In reconsidering the market aspects of the cloth pictures in terms of their essentialist qualities, we gain new insight into the instability of the modernist discourse. By fashioning his cloth pictures in the colors and fabrics of the economic miracle, by imbuing them with the generic qualities of commodities, and by making them into popular, marketable paintings, Palermo played into the growing market forces within the German art world. At the same time, he invoked in his cloth pictures the rhetoric of modernist essentialist painting, flatness and wholeness. In *Three American Painters*, Michael Fried granted that stylistic change "cannot be understood apart from a consideration of economic and other non-artistic factors" but immediately afterward cautioned that "by far the most important single characteristic of the new *modus vivendi* between the arts and bourgeois society gradually arrived at during the first decades of the present century has been the tendency of ambitious art to become more and more concerned with problems and issues intrinsic to itself."[126] Fried could not conceive of these two as one, that the drive toward self-reflexivity and essentialism

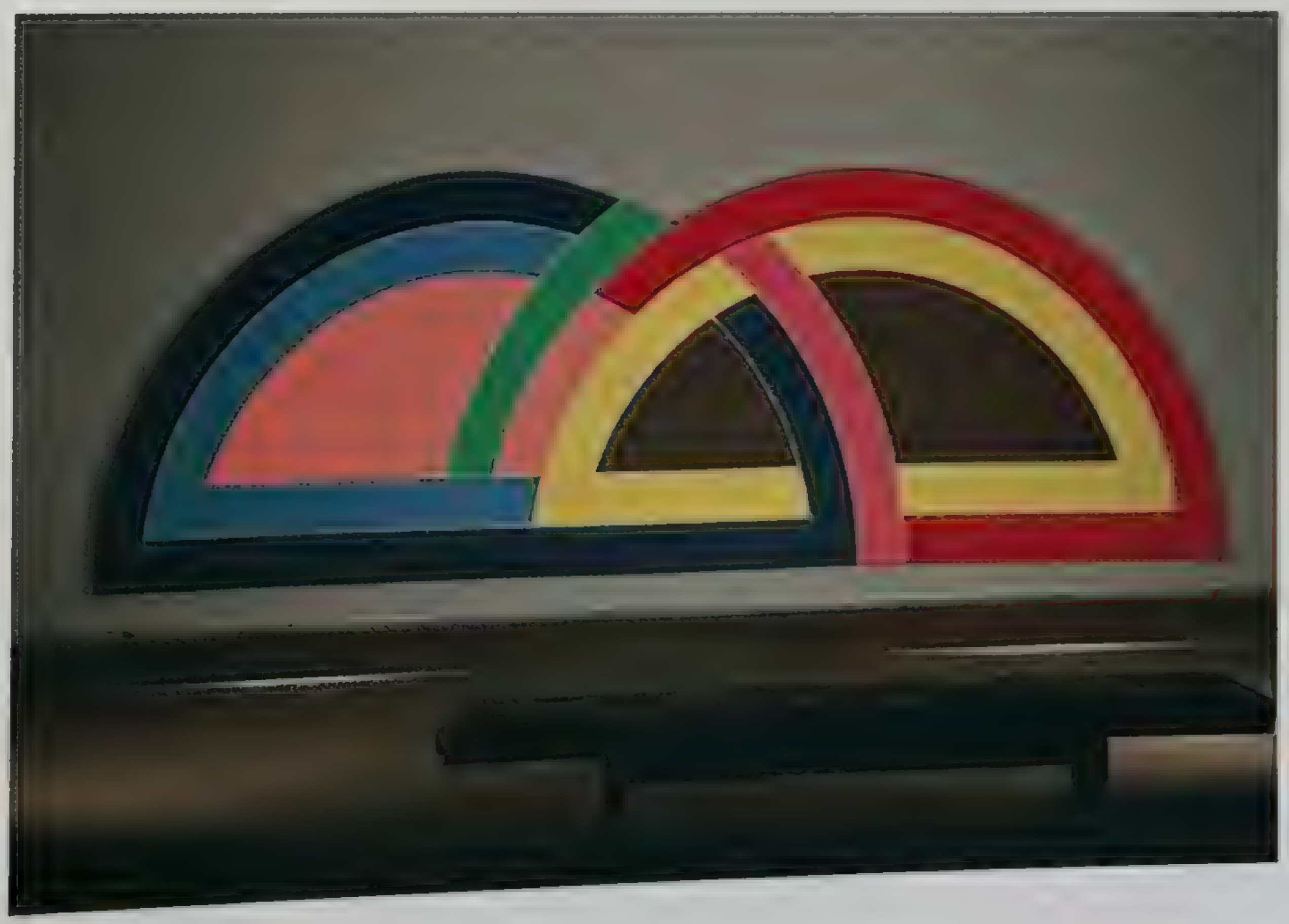


Fig. 64 Frank Stella, *Khurasan Gate I* (from the Protractor series), 1968. Acrylic paint on canvas, 94½ x 283½ in. Kunsthalle Bielefeld.

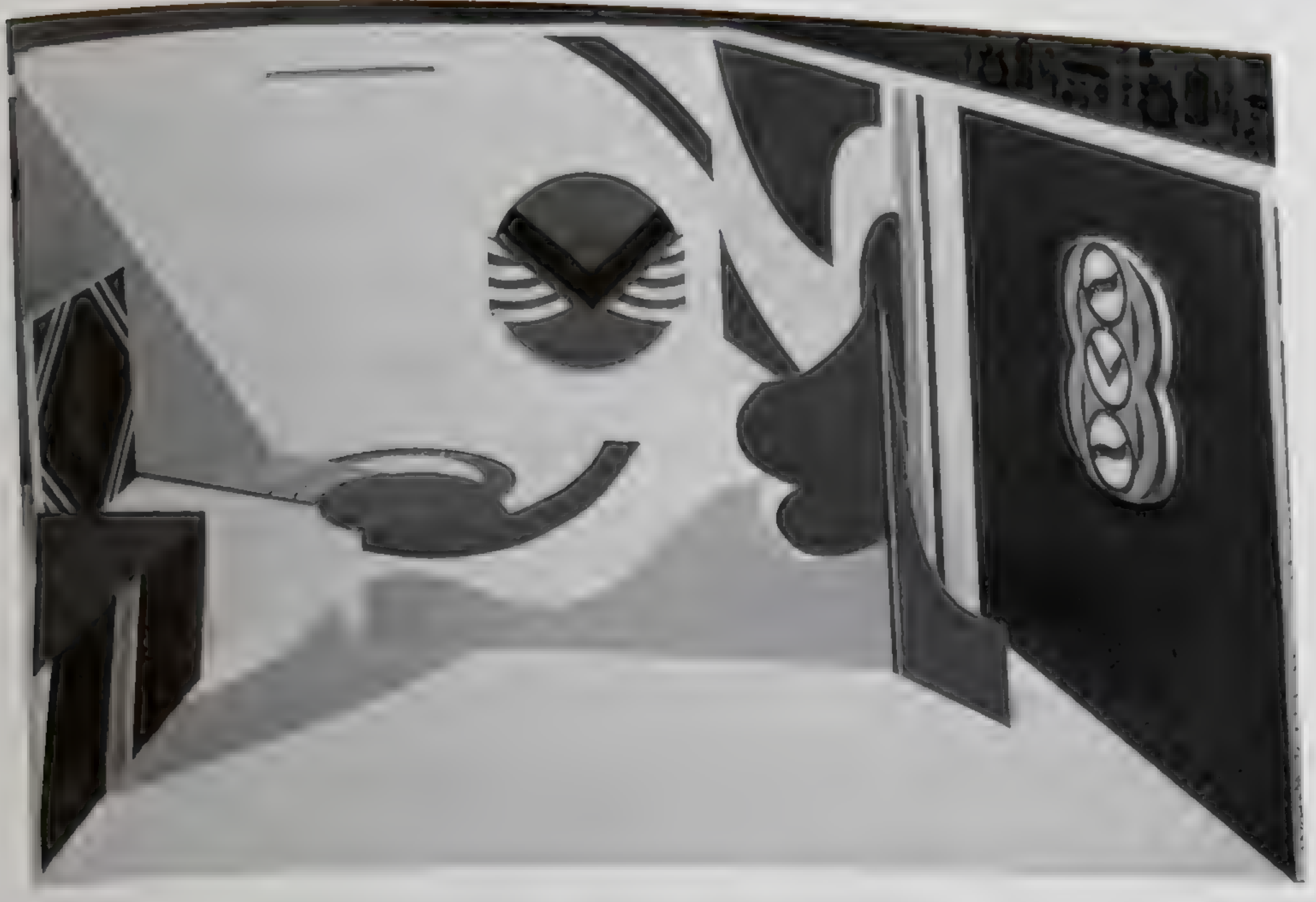
could be understood by and resonate with "economic and other non-artistic factors." Yet that is the crux of Palermo's cloth pictures: they combine autonomy with dependency, showing the ways in which modernist painting inevitably leads to its own commodification, proving that the most intrinsic matters of painting are also always extrinsic as well, and figuring the ways in which abstract forms can speak to their historical context.[127] Palermo understood this interrelationship well. In his love of American painting, he had experienced firsthand the transformation of the supposedly self-reflexive painting from the United States into nothing but a hot market item in the German art world.

The convergence of modernist painting's medium specificity and the Duchampian ready-made in the form of the hypothetical blank canvas is the subject of Thierry de Duve's essay "The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas," which centers on Frank Stella's Black paintings and Greenberg and Fried's writings.[128] De Duve argues that no one had created "the blank canvas"—and no one should—because to do so would simply repeat Duchamp; there is no need to see such a picture, and it has no future. Palermo's twists and turns, however, prove that the blank canvas can be both a successful modernist picture and an (assisted) ready-made. Each cloth picture Palermo made had to be made in order to prove itself a successful modernist picture and to pave a way to the future, to open up the endless possibilities that arise within the conjunction of ready-made and formalist painting.[129] It is for this reason that Palermo proves to be so important to contemporary painters and artists. His decorative, commercial, and popular references within abstraction opened up a lexicon of new sources, forms, and materials that were then reformulated by artists ranging from Liam Gillick to Wayde Guyton to Damien Hirst to David Reed. Greenbergian modernism and the rising art market sent many artists down dead-end paths—perpetually refining the essence of a medium, for example, or futilely protesting market forces. Palermo saw the potential of modernism by the yard.

COLOR FIELD, SIGNAL, POP

The inadvertent influence of popular taste and a proximity to pop art can be found in some modernist painting and abstract art made in the United States after the war, especially during the sixties. But American art commonly lacked the blatancy and consistency of Palermo's engagement with the market and popular culture, and only a few took notice of the connection.[130] Caroline A. Jones has discussed the ways Stella's work, especially the Black paintings and Aluminum paintings of the late fifties and early sixties, explicitly refers to the world outside the artist's studio, the art market, and the corporate world in general. According to Jones, Stella's paintings insist on an artistic dimension but at the same time display an industrial aesthetic on performative, iconic, and metaphorical levels. Aspects she discusses in this regard are the works' objectness, the use of house paint in the Black paintings, the repellent effect and outward thrust of the Aluminum paintings, the expansive die-cut shapes, the diagrammatic, logolike forms, the serial production—which later imitated the production line when Stella employed assistants to help produce the works—and the specific references to the gallery space by means of scale and format.[131]

Even more striking, however, are the period colors of Stella's mid- to late sixties work: the fluorescent paints he used in the Moroccan paintings, the subsequent Irregular Polygon series of 1966 and 1967, and, above all, the Protractor series of 1967 and 1968 (fig. 64). The garish and abundant color scales and combinations correspond vividly to those found within American popular culture—in advertising of course, but also in living environments and in the world of fashion. Discussing the work of Jules Olitski, Fried remarked that his "combinations of colors. . . at first sight appear vulgar, over-pretty or garishly sentimental." Yet he insisted that Olitski's canvases "prove that any colors—literally, *any* colors—can be combined to produce major art. . . . When a painting of his fails, it most often does so by failing to overcome the banality of its constituents."[132]



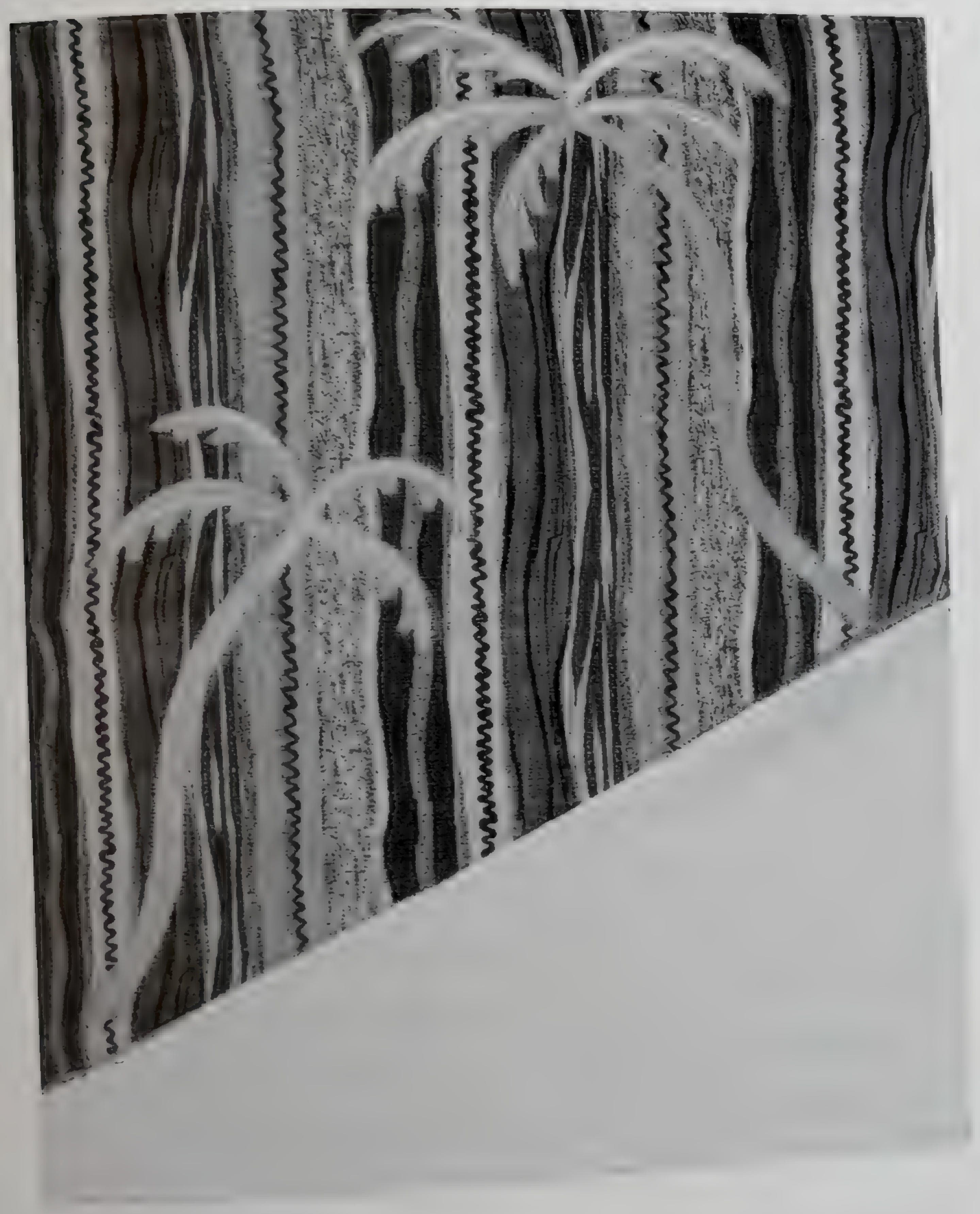


Fig. 65 *Winfred Gaul Verkehrszeichen und Signale* (Winfred Gaul, Traffic Signs and Signals) exhibition at Kunsthalle Mannheim, 22 June–24 July 1966. © 2007 Estate of Winfred Gaul.

Fig. 66 Sigmar Polke, *Das Palmen Bild* (The Palm Tree Picture), 1964. Synthetic resin on decorative fabric, 91 x 76 cm. Private collection. © Sigmar Polke.

Not everyone agreed. Robert Smithson observed that this vernacular feel of colors was inevitably at odds with Fried's purist discourse, which had limited the meanings of color-field painting: "The impure-purist surface is very much in evidence in the new abstract art, but I think Stella was the first to employ it. The iridescent purple, green, and silver surfaces that followed Stella's all-black works, conveyed a rather lurid presence through their symmetries. An exacerbated, gorgeous color gives a chilling bite to the purist context. Immaculate beginnings are subsumed by glittering ends. Like Mallarmé's 'Heriodiade,' these surfaces disclose a 'cold scintillation'; they seem to 'love the horror of being virgin.' . . . Here beauty is allied with the repulsive in accordance with highly rigid rules. One's sight is mentally abolished by Stella's hermetic kingdom of surfaces."[133]

If the pop aspects of color-field painting or more pop-oriented abstract painting like that of Al Held or Leon Polk Smith quickly disappeared from the discussions of most American critics, it was probably because they did not fit comfortably into either the dominant modernist framework or the terminology of pop art.[134] With the exception of Donald Judd's remarks on pop artists like Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg, critics generally did not discuss the presence of modernist qualities in pop art, despite the fact that pop employed similarly strong, intense color and conveyed the sense of wholeness inherent in its found motifs.[135] The polarization that characterizes the criticism and historiography of American art in the sixties to this day, with pop art on the one hand and color-field painting and minimalism on the other, appears overstated in light of the many ways in which both were related and intertwined not only in Palermo's cloth pictures but also, if not always as successfully, in other German painting of the period. It seems that in the absence of a critical framework such as the one provided by Greenberg, German artists felt free to understand American art beyond the constraints of this polarization.[136]

Despite references to a kinship between Palermo's cloth pictures and pop and color-field painting, Palermo scholars and critics have made little of the connection.[137] This dualism was, however, a common trope in the discussions surrounding what came to be known in Germany in the mid-sixties as Signale or Signalkunst, signals or signal art. The term became widespread following Arnold Rüdlinger's 1965 exhibition *Signale* at the Kunsthalle Basel, which included American painters like Al Held, Kenneth Noland, and Jules Olitski as well as Germans such as Georg Karl Pfahler. Other German painters who came to be known under this label were Winfred Gaul and Lothar Quinte (fig. 65). Signal art was praised for its reaction against the subjectivism of Informel painting, for translating a vernacular, publicly accessible language into an artistic context, and for incorporating the precise gestalt, intense colors, geometric shapes, and large scale of traffic signs into serious abstract painting.[138] Heinz Ohff positioned Gaul between "pop and hard edge"; Manfred de la Motte wrote that "pop art at the stage of abstraction" could be "a slogan for many young artists in Germany," and Rolf-Gunter Dienst regarded the generous colors and formal outlook of signal art as a "response to the sensual overload and advertisement world of the big cities that did not imitate or satirize, like most examples of pop art, but integrated them into an artistic context."[139] Fried, as one might expect, had nothing but disdain for what he referred to as "sign painting," and he wittily listed its deficiencies in a discussion of the work of Robert Indiana: "First, it seems clear that sign painting is chiefly a pretext for getting the artist to the point of actually applying paint to the canvas. That such a pretext should be needed is one indication of crisis in American painting today. Second . . . the pretext is not only literary but sentimental. Third, the paintings that most succeed do so in the same terms and by the same lights as paintings that are devoid of sign imagery. But they can never be as good as a good non-sign-painting because they will always contain material extrinsic to the problems of painting that has been brought in partly as a solution to, or way

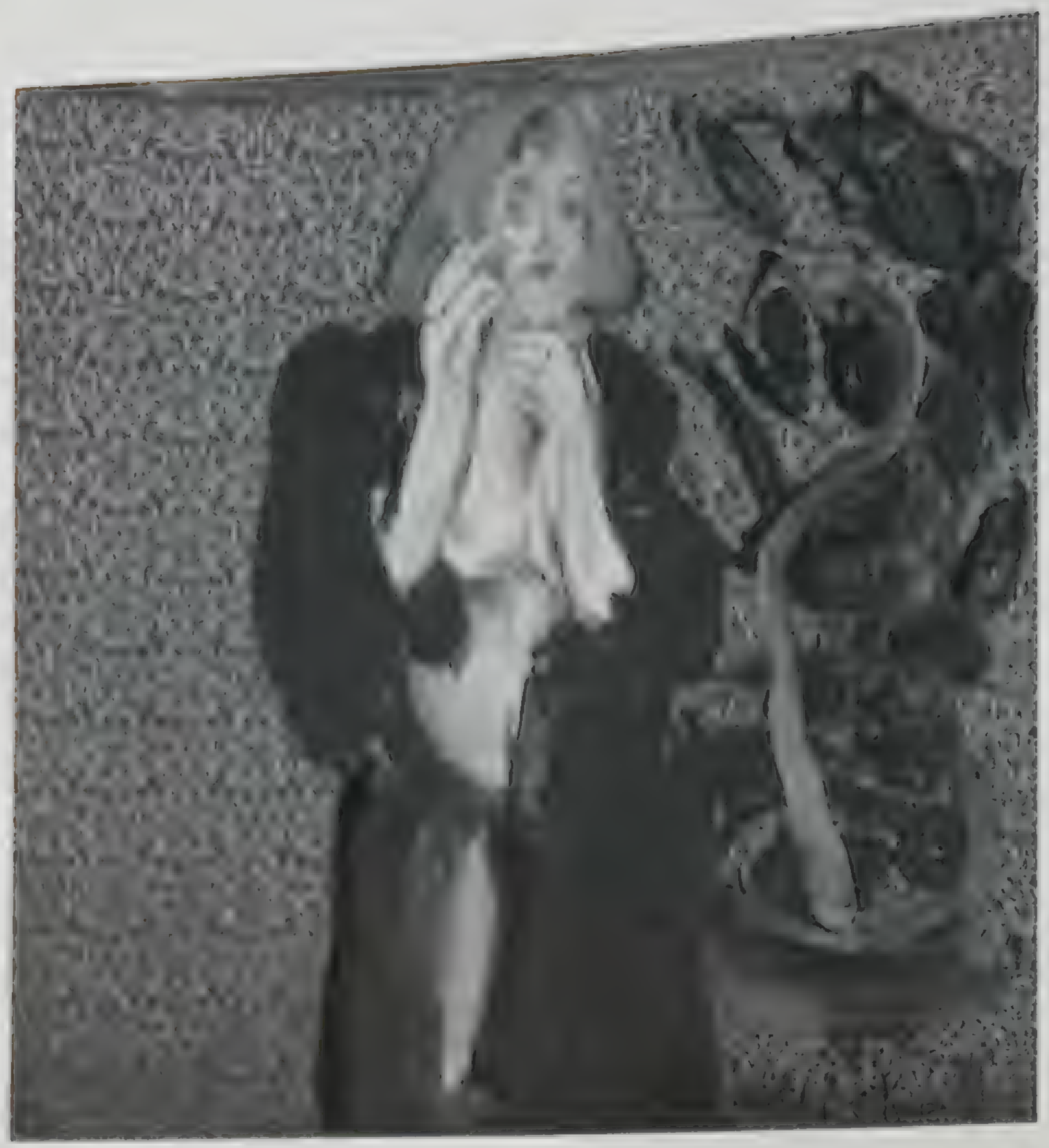


Fig. 67 K. H. Hödicke, *Christa*, 1962. Synthetic resin on decorative fabric, 150 x 150 cm. Private collection.

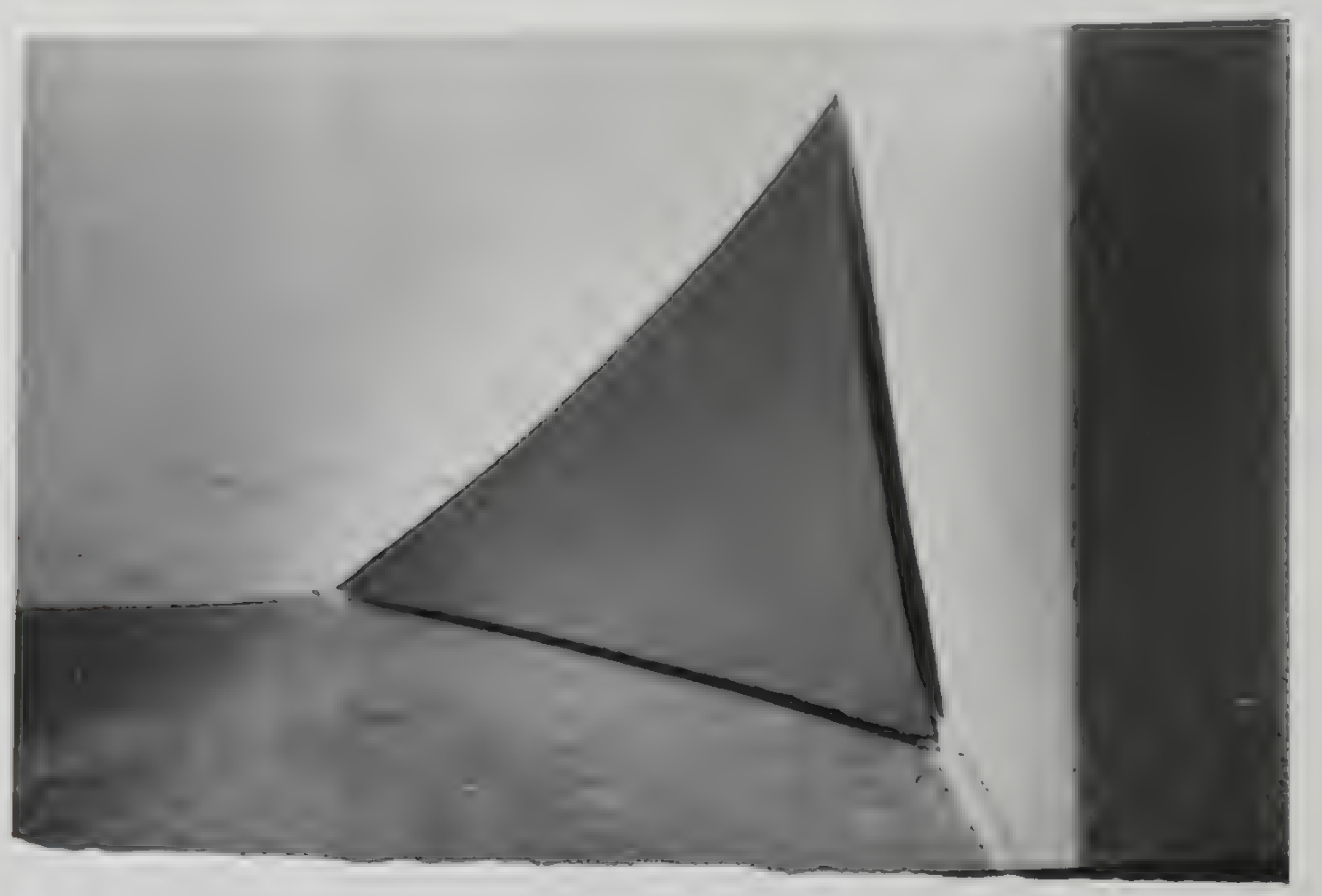


Fig. 68 Joseph Beuys, *Filzecke* (Felt Corner), c. 1963–64. Felt tied into the corner of a room with twine, 190 x 190 x 190 cm. Part of *Block Beuys*, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt. Photograph © 2007 Ute Klophaus, Wuppertal.

of getting around, those same problems. And fourth, a rough rule of thumb for sign painting would seem to be, the better the sign, the worse the painting."[140]

Palermo, by contrast, respected sign and signal painters. He owned a painting by Peter Brüning, joined other artists in requesting that the work of Gaul and others be included in a group exhibition of Düsseldorf artists in Edinburgh entitled *STRATEGY: GET ARTS*, and, in planning his work for that exhibition, talked about a "placard-like conversion of the main entrance. . . by means of signals." We do not know his reasons, but he must have felt some affinity with signal artists, that they shared his aim of opening up new possibilities for abstract painting.[141] In comparison with Palermo's cloth pictures, which lead modernist painting into the realm of the market and popular taste by a number of avenues, German signal painting appears far less consistent and complex—less successful as modernist painting and less successfully embedded in the market and popular taste.

There was another German painter who, before Palermo, seemed interested in signal art. According to K. O. Götz, his pupil Gerhard Richter's early student paintings, following some Informel work, were signal art.[142] Neither "style" is included in Richter's catalogue raisonné, and his work quickly became more sophisticated, but some of his early interest stuck and eventually brought him to Palermo. Palermo's relationship and collaborations with Richter will be discussed in Chapter 5, but a brief discussion of Richter's work here will underline how important the connection between popular taste and essentialism, between pop art and modernist painting was to Palermo. Palermo's friendship with Richter and Polke, their pop attitudes, and in particular Polke's use of printed commercial cloth beginning with his 1964 *Das Palmen Bild* (The Palm Tree Picture, fig. 66), were probably crucial to Palermo in developing his first cloth pictures. Palermo must have been aware of at least some other precedents, even if they did not have much to do with his particular interest in modernist painting—K. H. Hödicke's use of patterned fabric in his 1962 painting *Christa* (fig. 67), Franz Erhard Walther's use of fabric from 1963 on for his *Werksatz* (Work Set) objects (see fig. 82), and Beuys's use of felt (fig. 68). It is unknown whether or when Palermo became aware of artists who were working with fabric outside of Germany and—like Palermo and unlike his German peers—were using fabric works to comment on modernist painting. What come to mind immediately are Daniel Buren's signature striped paintings made from awning fabric starting in 1965, Alighiero Boetti's camouflage fabric works, first made in 1966, Richard Tuttle's cloth pieces, begun in 1967, and Ellsworth Kelly's one-time experiment with dyed fabric in *Red Yellow Blue White* (1952).[143] Certainly the work being done by his German friends had more immediate impact on Palermo. Polke and Richter, among others, went fabric shopping with Palermo. Richter recalls accompanying him to Düsseldorf's Kaufhof and Seidenhaus Schmitz, where Palermo would hold fabrics together and ask, "Looks pretty, no?" Polke did not consider it much fun and quipped, "I always had to look for some patterns, and for me it was more about the rapport than the monochrome, which I thought was too simple, you know, really dopey. And while others were toiling at I don't know what, he sewed two pieces of fabric together and had the day off." Polke acknowledged, of course, that Palermo's cloth pictures weren't "a joke"; his tone is one of loving, teasing respect.[144]

Unlike Polke's work, Richter's art shares with Palermo's a sincere rather than ironic meeting of pop and modernism. Richter's tongue-in-cheek associations and occasional collaborations with Lueg and Polke defined his work and persona near the end of the 1960s (see fig. 95). From around 1966 on, however, Richter grew closer and closer to Palermo, and the cloth pictures especially fostered an artistic dialogue between the two. In their exploration of the intersection of ready-made and abstraction, of painting and the market, Richter's color chart paintings are closely related to Palermo's cloth pictures. Both artists in a sense made vernacular, abstract paint-

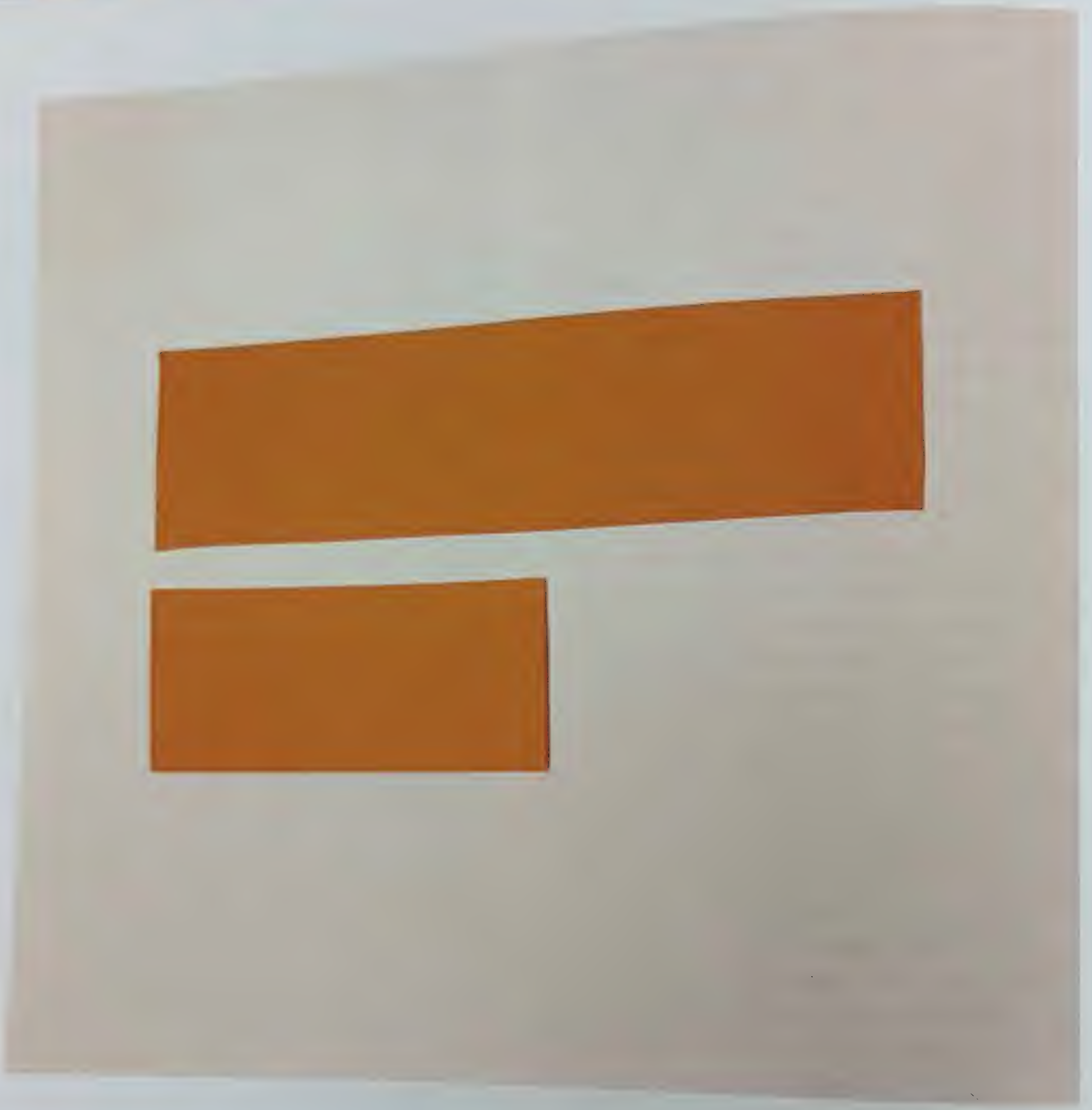


Fig. 69 *Leisesprecher I* (Quiet Speaker I) (*Wvz* 90), 1969. Dyed Nessel, 150 x 130 cm. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

ings, working with ready-made colors stemming from their everyday environment. While Palermo used pre-dyed commercial cloth, Richter copied industrial charts of color samples (see fig. 128). Richter began his color charts sometime before they were first exhibited at Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem in October 1966; Palermo began his cloth pictures around the same time, probably following the summer sale in August 1966. When he painted his first color charts, Richter recalls, "It certainly also had a lot to do with Palermo and his interests."[145] Although the two artists were exploring these issues at roughly the same time, it seems clear that Palermo and his cloth pictures gave Richter the confidence to paint abstractly. The color charts represent a major shift in Richter's work, and they inaugurated the conjunction of abstract and figurative art he is best known for. They are also the first abstract paintings Richter included in his official oeuvre, following half a decade in which he painted blurred but mostly recognizable motifs based on photographs. Richter nevertheless rightly stressed that his color charts "had more to do with pop art" than modernist art, for unlike the cloth pictures, they cannot easily be described as "successful" modernist paintings.[146] Richter's color charts, which just fail to cross the fine line that separates pop art and popular taste from modernist essentialist painting, help illuminate the ways Palermo's cloth pictures succeed.

One of their untitled 1971 collaborations clarifies their point of difference (see fig. 156). It consists of two diptychs, each containing an off-white square painting by Palermo on the right and a blurred, semi-abstract rendering of light reflections held in a range of off-white, beige, and brown tones by Richter on the left.[147] Combined with the airbrushed look of the smooth gradations and shadings, which later filled the backgrounds of his gestural paintings, the references to Richter's blurred photographic paintings assert the pop quality of his abstraction. Palermo's two monochrome paintings, by contrast, in their flatness and wholeness assert the essentialist aspects of his abstraction. Eager to maintain a balance of pop and modernist painting, Palermo distills these aspects more radically than was ever possible or necessary without Richter's pop counterbalance. These were Palermo's most radically monochrome paintings up to that point. Richter's blurs stand in, as it were, for the commercial fabric that Palermo here replaced, or covered over, with oil paint.[148]

Palermo teased apart these two dimensions of his cloth pictures in a series of three works entitled *Leisesprecher* (Quiet Speaker, fig. 69; see fig. 157). While the first two versions, in yellow and red, respectively, were completed by 1969, the last, relatively large and most confident version, measuring about 3.8 meters in height and 4.27 meters at its maximum width, was completed only in 1972, about half a year after his collaboration with Richter on the diptych. This version was included in the exhibition presentation of the diptych, and not just because it matched that work in color. Size differences aside, each of the three *Leisesprecher* consists of a large rectangular hemmed piece of fabric pinned directly to the wall and a smaller rectangular stretched canvas made of the same material placed below it. Most dramatic in profile but clearly visible from a frontal view, the *Leisesprecher* present the entwinement at the heart of the cloth pictures pulled apart: a length of commercial fabric hanging flabby and a pure modernist picture, monochrome and immaculate.[149]

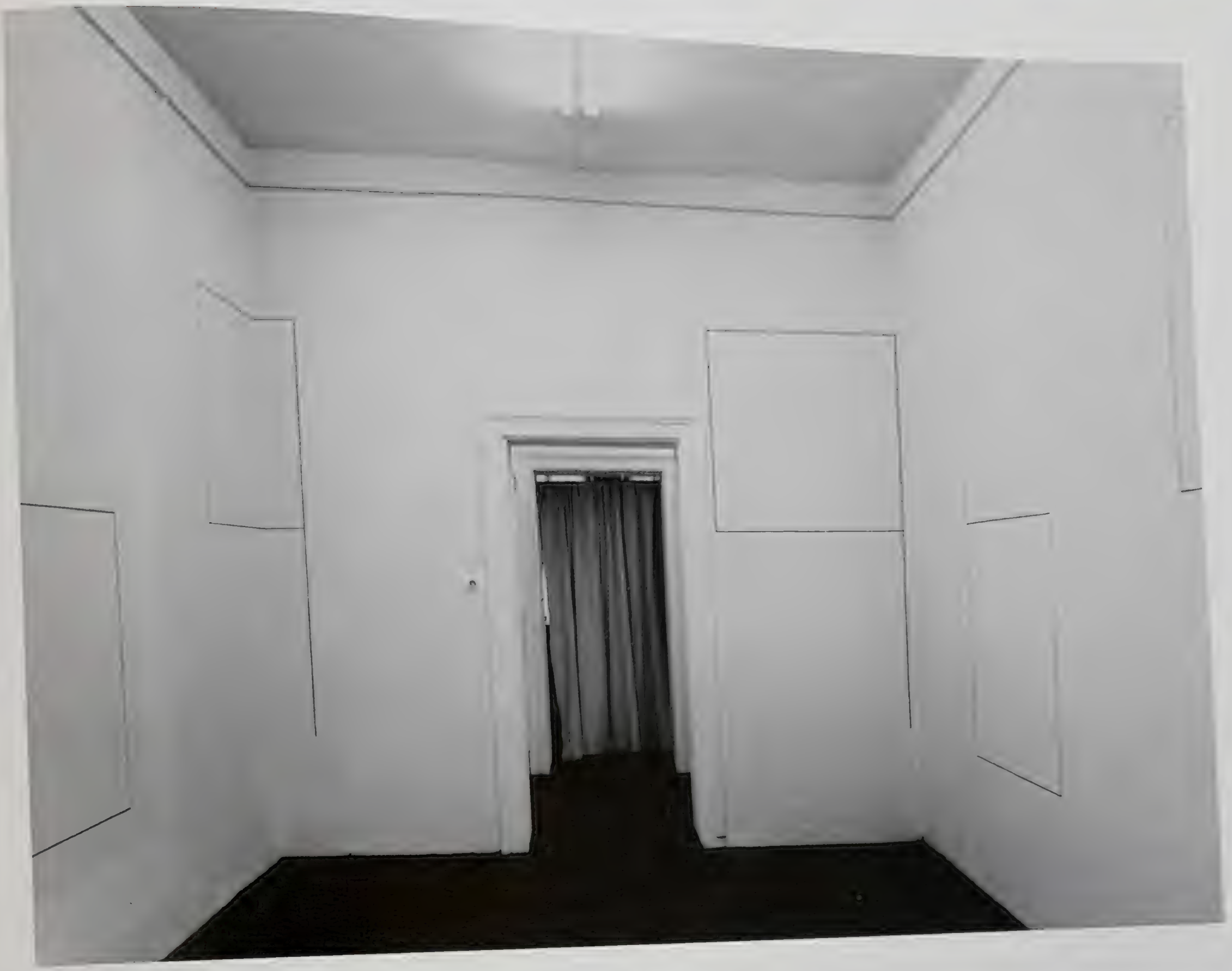
3

WALL PAINTINGS, 1968–1973
ABSTRACTION AND DECORATION

Between December 1968 and March 1973, Palermo made nearly thirty wall drawings and paintings. In the estimation of many of his friends, these wall works stand "among the most important works by Palermo." Yet they are also his most elusive body of work because not a single original survives and because at first sight the pieces appear strikingly different from one another and from his other work. Nevertheless, they too partake in the historical resonance of abstract forms and colors that is central to Palermo's work. When Palermo drew lines on walls or painted walls in monochrome fields of color, when he highlighted spatial characteristics of rooms or added decorative forms, some critics dismissed him as a "mere" wall painter while others praised him for providing an "intensive experience of space."[1] These opposing accounts are representative of the reception of Palermo's wall paintings and are important for understanding the ways in which they exemplify the mobilization of decoration in service of abstract art that is historically meaningful in terms of both abstract painting in general and the contexts of the German economic miracle and of debates about the social and political role of art.

Palermo's first wall drawing exhibition opened at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich on 12 December 1968, just as wall works were emerging as a signature medium of what came to be known as conceptual art. In October of that year, Sol LeWitt had exhibited his first wall drawing at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, and Hanne Darboven had mounted floor to ceiling photostats with rows of prime numbers on the walls of Konrad Fischer's gallery in Düsseldorf. Mel Bochner had just begun to experiment with drawings that developed into his measurement rooms, the first of which was mounted in May 1969—as it happened, a few paint layers on top of Palermo's first wall drawing on the same walls—and the second of which was created days later for an exhibition at Fischer's gallery, whose opening Palermo attended.[2] In 1970 a complete exhibition was devoted to the medium. *Using Walls (Indoors)* at the Jewish Museum in New York featured Bochner and LeWitt, Daniel Buren, Lawrence Weiner, and many others, but not Palermo. Was the German wall painter a pioneering if quickly forgotten conceptual artist?

At Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Palermo drew variations of what he called "open," "closed," and "divided" squares with red-brown oil stick on the walls of the central exhibition space.[3] Each of the two side galleries featured a single configuration drawn in a series, alternating right side up and upside down with equal distance between them, and spanning the full circumference of the space, often disregarding architectural elements like corners (fig. 70). While Palermo was probably unaware of LeWitt's and Bochner's wall work across the Atlantic, he was almost certainly inspired by the former's *49 Three-Part Variations on Three Different Kinds of Cubes.* That sculptural series—which ran through all possible permutations of combining a solid cube, a cube with opposite sides removed, and a cube with one side removed (fig. 71)—was on view at Documenta 4 during the summer of 1968, only four months before Palermo's first wall drawing. That reference point seems a more plausible origin of the wall works than the one relayed in an anecdote by Franz Dahlem, partner in the Galerie Heiner Friedrich until 1967, asserting that he had originally suggested a provocative idea to Palermo that later turned into a conceptual project. Alluding to the exhibitions staged in Munich by the National Socialists in the 1930s, he told Palermo, "You know, there is no benefit to having any exhibition in Munich again. Why don't you paint swastikas on the wall?" As Dahlem explained, "That was my aggression toward Munich, about which Peter only laughed. Then we still took these numbers. A few nights before I had the idea that if one writes 6 to [1]0 directly under 1 to 5, that is, 6 under 1, 7 under 2, etc., and if one subtracts the upper number from the lower one, one always gets 5. In effect that is a number poem. This he incorporated in his exhibition. He drew these numbers, and the work was then hung in the exhibition and I think shown in the hallway."[4]



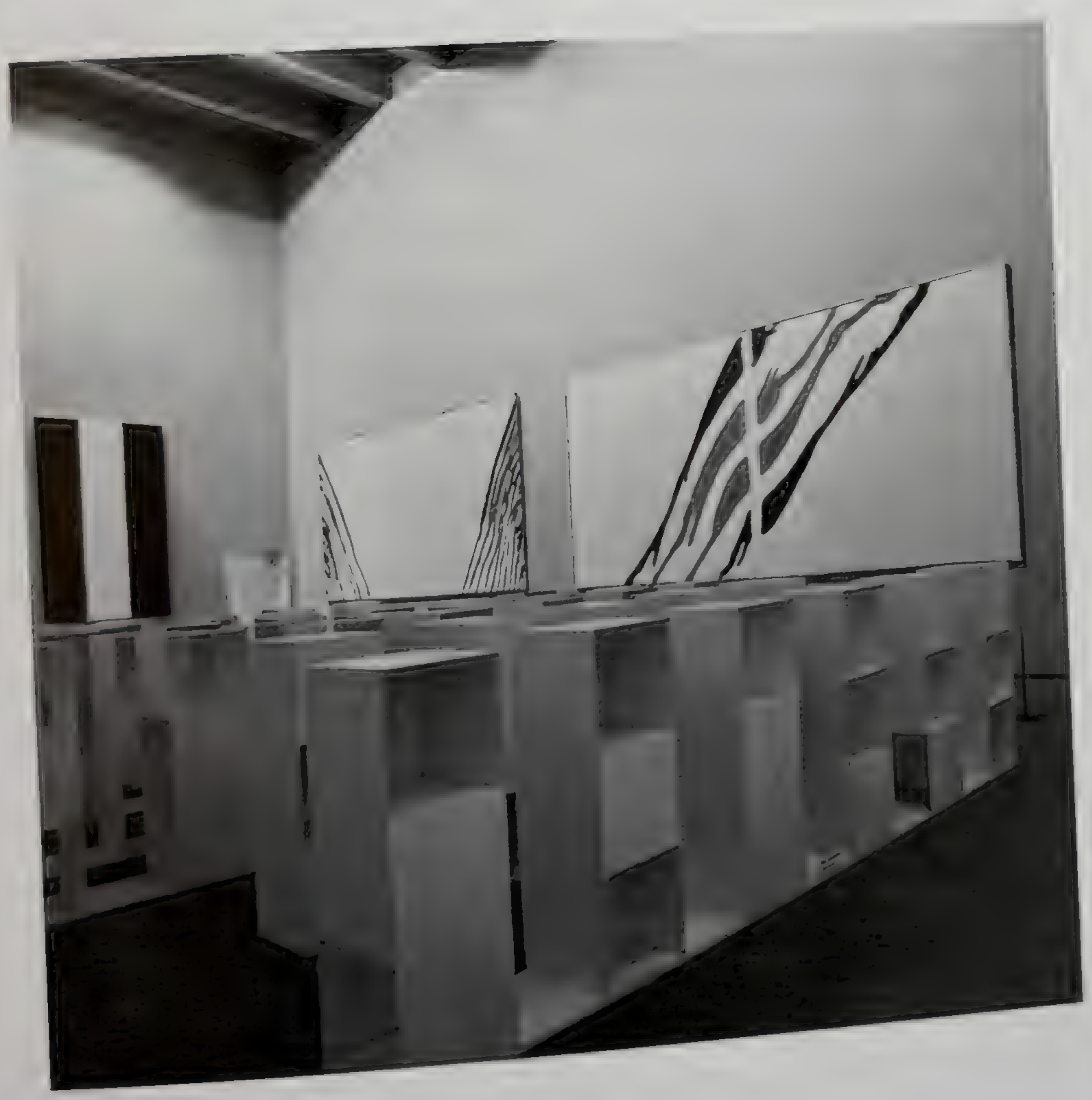


Fig. 70 *5*, Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich, 12 December 1968–20 January 1969.
Oil crayon over pencil on walls, configurations: 200 x 100 or 200 x 200 cm; three spaces: 325 x 625 cm, 606 x 650 cm, 329 x 626 cm.

Fig. 71 Sol LeWitt, *49 Three-Part Variations on Three Different Kinds of Cubes*, 1967, as exhibited at Documenta 4, 27 June–6 October 1968. Enamel on steel, each 23$^5/_8$ x 7$^7/_8$ x 7$^7/_8$ in.
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio.

Regardless of whether this story is accurate, two conclusions can be drawn from it that bear on the work's status as conceptual art. First, a visitor to the exhibition could not intuit Dahlem's or any other mathematical equation that might have inspired Palermo's configurations. Although a print featuring numbers from zero to nine was used as the exhibition poster and although *5* has—mistakenly, I believe—become the accepted title for the work, variations on a highly abstracted configuration of two stacked open squares, a stylized number five, are the only related forms to appear on the walls.[5] Second, Palermo did not include a swastika, although it was a legitimate variation in keeping with the series of open and closed squares, probably because of its historical associations. Like LeWitt, Palermo continuously altered a given parameter by opening and closing it; LeWitt chose a cube, Palermo a square. Yet Palermo's variations were at best playful, and they lacked the precise, absurdly exhaustive system that underlay LeWitt's work.[6] Did Palermo not understand LeWitt? Or did he, like so many of his European contemporaries, mock the older American artist in an act of defiance at what many perceived as the onslaught of American art in Germany?

Shortly after Palermo's death, the critic Kenneth Baker noted that it is "difficult to decide whether Palermo's work is an episode of painting or of Conceptual activity."[7] The wall paintings especially have often been associated with conceptual art. At the 1972 Documenta 5 exhibition, Palermo's entry was a wall painting located in a staircase that took visitors to the work of the Art & Language group and to that of John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Mel Bochner, Jan Dibbets, and LeWitt, among others (see fig. 92).[8] Five panels from Palermo's documentation of this painting were included in the 1995 conceptual art survey exhibition *Reconsidering the Object of Art* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

Referring to the critic Lucy Lippard's definition of conceptual art as "dematerialized," the curators of that exhibition wrote, "While these new works were often not dematerialized in a literal sense, they were nevertheless no longer contained within the object. Instead, it became a point of reference."[9] Based on this rather narrow definition of conceptual art as an investigation of the nature of the art object—its material constitution and its theoretical, historical definition—Palermo can be cast in the role of conceptual artist with regard to his wall paintings for a number of reasons. He frequently outlined his projects in letters to curators or in preliminary sketches, occasionally even referring to the latter as "concepts."[10] And by drawing or painting directly onto the walls, Palermo no longer made tangible objects. His "object" of art was literally "dematerialized," no longer occupying but instead merely delimiting space.

The documentation of the wall paintings, which Palermo began sometime around 1971, makes perhaps the most compelling case for their identification as conceptual art. With the help of Thordis Moeller, who helped install his first wall drawing while she was an assistant in the Munich branch of Galerie Heiner Friedrich, and of Anton (Tünn) Konerding, a friend and professor of graphic design at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, materials such as installation photographs, sketches, ground plans, sections, and notes were arranged and glued on what would eventually amount to forty-nine signed cardboard sheets measuring ninety by sixty-six centimeters.[11] Some form of documentation, although probably not the documentation as we know it today, was exhibited in January 1971 as a work in progress at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Cologne under the title *Palermo Projekte 68/70* (Palermo Projects, 1968–70; fig. 72). The panels were exhibited again posthumously as a coherent body of work at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in April 1978 and at the galerie art in progress in Düsseldorf in 1980, treated as quasi-artworks and physically disconnected from their original sites.[12] Now in the collection of the Kunstmuseum Bonn and included in the catalogue raisonné, this documentation inevitably forms the basis for discussions of the wall paintings and drawings, none

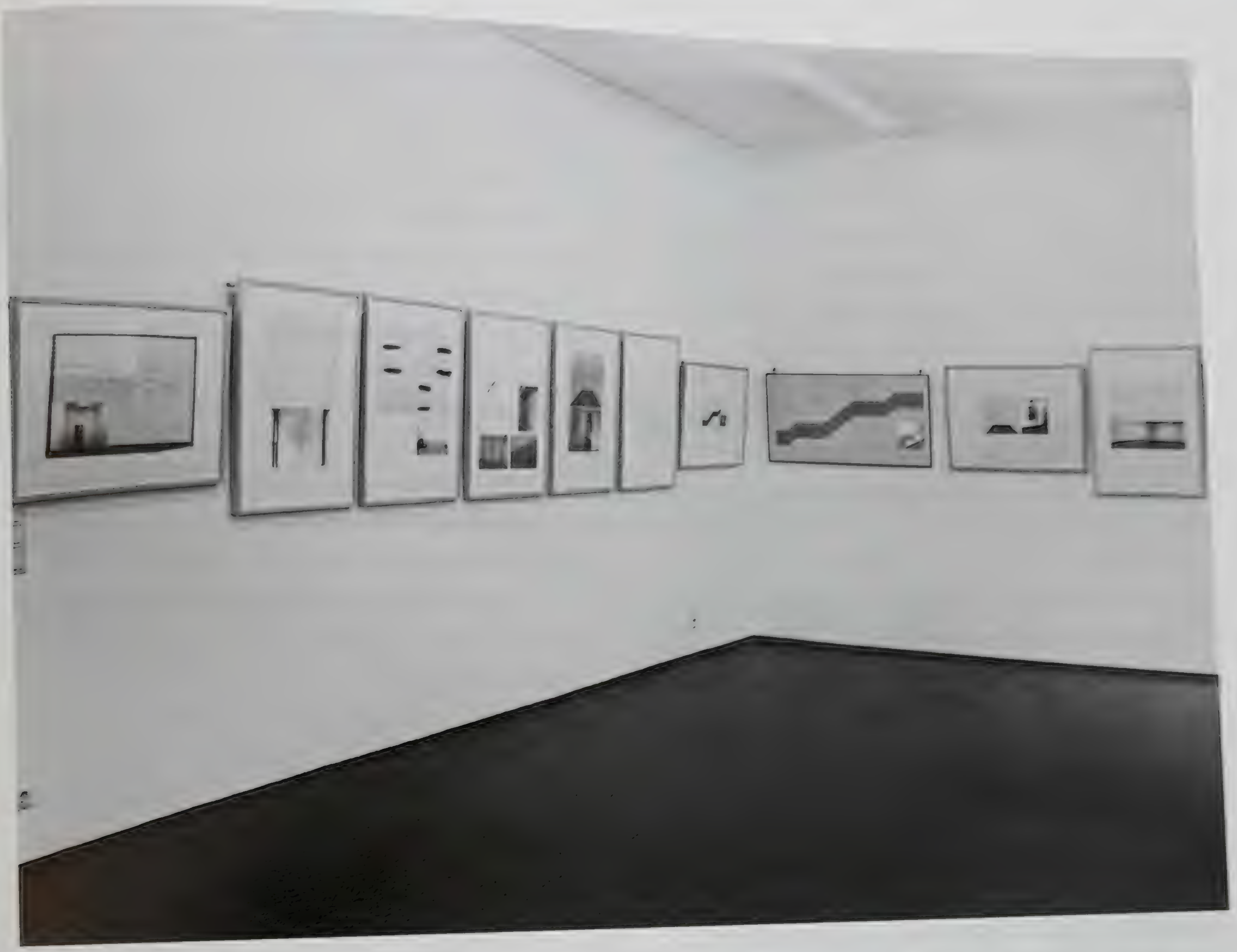


Fig. 72 *Palermo Projekte 68/70* exhibition, Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Cologne, 15–30 January 1971

of which has survived.[13] The similarity to idea-based conceptual art is apparent, especially to LeWitt's written instructions and ink drawings for his wall drawings, but also to photo-based creations of largely immaterial works by artists like Robert Barry.[14]

Yet any classification of this body of work as conceptual art is superficial and misguided. Differences between it and LeWitt's wall drawings, in particular, abound. Compared to LeWitt's detailed directions, Palermo's documentation appears insufficient: the photographs are too small and often unclear, the texts too brief and imprecise. For the American artist, idea and execution are equally important; based on his plans, anybody could produce the wall drawings and even transfer and adapt them to other spaces.[15] By contrast, Palermo meticulously executed all his wall paintings and drawings himself (although he was sometimes helped by others).[16] Palermo's works were site specific in nature and, with the exception of his first wall drawing, responded to the particular characteristics of a given space—lines that follow the outlines of walls around door frames and heating systems, replications of preexisting shapes such as window frames. Palermo sometimes completely overturned his idea for a wall painting after seeing the exhibition space.[17] The final formats and, in many cases, the basic ideas of Palermo's wall paintings thus evolved from the artist's consideration of the exhibition space, what he called its specific "spatial relations" or *Raumverhältnisse*.[18] In at least one work, for a group exhibition at the Edinburgh College of Art, Palermo completely overthrew two previous ideas after he saw the actual space. Sketches show that he had originally planned either to circumscribe the walls surrounding the staircase of the college with a band (in keeping with previous wall drawings) or to fill in the space underneath the banister with a monochrome color area (variations of which would be realized in other exhibitions soon afterward). He decided instead to intervene directly in the characteristic, and highly specific, decorative scheme of the beaux-arts architecture.[19] Palermo's documentations, even though they sometimes included preliminary sketches and detailed measurements, were records, never "conceptual" instructions.

This does not mean that Palermo enjoyed the ephemerality of this body of work. Probably he set out to document the wall paintings and drawings because he disliked their transience. In 1970, Klaus Gallwitz, then director of the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, noted the artist's wish to make some of the drawings permanent: "He unsentimentally stated that for once this thing would have to be preserved. His room or his wall, he said, was simply more than a mere object for exhibition, which subsequently gets taken down or scratched off."[20] Moreover, Palermo stressed the importance of experiencing these works in person when he stated, "[The work] does not stay in the photograph; it stays only in the memory of someone who actually stood inside."[21] These statements present the art historian with the impossible task of rescuing from oblivion the no longer extant wall paintings, which were centered on an experience that can no longer be had.[22]

The only way to come to terms with this dilemma is to reconstruct, as much as possible, what it was like to "stand inside" Palermo's wall paintings. To do so, I have drawn on three sources: Palermo's own documentation, contemporary reviews, and reconstructions. Palermo's documents include numerous sketches, photographs, and collages in addition to the ones featured on the panels he assembled; they also include the artist's letters to curators and interview fragments. In addition, abundant contemporary exhibition reviews were published in art magazines and, especially, local newspapers, frequently including descriptions by "someone who actually stood inside." Finally, several wall paintings, wall drawings, and related projects have been reconstructed or remade as homages. These are, in chronological order:

1984 A follow-up to a collaboration between Palermo and Gerhard Richter, originally at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Cologne, at the Lenbachhaus in Munich, where Richter had the walls surrounding a recently acquired version of the sculptures from this collaboration painted "in memory of and as an homage to Palermo and therefore most suitable to the sculptures"; it was not, as Richter clarifies, intended "to reconstruct Palermo (because I was not authorized to do so nor would it have been possible in a completely different room with completely different proportions)." The follow-up version was entitled *Zwei Skulpturen für einen Raum von Palermo* (Two Sculptures for a Room by Palermo); the original exhibition was entitled *Wandmalerei und Skulptur* (Wall Painting and Sculpture).[23]

1986 A reconstruction by Imi Knoebel of a collaboration between Palermo and Knoebel at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in the original space but with slight alterations.[24]

1991 A remake of Palermo's 1970 wall painting at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in and by the gallery of Marie-Puck Broodthaers based on a drawing in her collection.[25]

1993 A controversial combined uncovering and reconstruction of a wall painting at the Kunstverein in Hamburg preceding the building's destruction.[26]

1999 An in situ reconstruction of Palermo's wall painting for the Kunstverein in Frankfurt that remains on view.

2000 A temporary reconstruction of a wall painting, originally installed at the Galerie Konrad Fischer, at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, for the group exhibition *The Object Sculpture*.[27]

2002 Refabrication in Barcelona of a wall installation first realized at the 1976 Venice Biennale, based on photographs and a model made by Palermo.[28]

2005 A reconstruction of Palermo's wall painting at the Edinburgh College of Art by the college's "Palermo Restore Project."

In most cases, some aspects of these reconstructions were problematic: the restoration attempt in Hamburg failed because the paint layer could not be restored to its original even surface; the spaces in Brussels and Leeds differed significantly from the original locations; and the colors were usually based solely on visual approximations of the original paint. Nevertheless, these reconstructions have allowed viewers to approximate the original experience, giving us, as one young artist recently put it, a "taste" of the original work.[29] Unlike new instantiations of most conceptual wall works, however, none of these reconstructions can be considered Palermo's work per se; none of them was strictly speaking a restoration of a work to its original constitution. Only various extant versions of the blue triangle multiple (see fig. 60) can be considered original wall paintings; they were made by others but as instructed and authorized by the artist and thus have a status identical to that of LeWitt's wall drawings.

Palermo's first wall drawing could thus be considered a false start. Configurations from the Munich wall painting appeared only once more, a few months later, in a wall drawing for the exhibition *Düsseldorfer Szene* at the Kunstmuseum Luzern (Lucerne).[30] By and large, however, an interest in the experience of spatial relations and a phenomenological approach to space replaced the artist's initial pursuit of the principle of permutation, which became central to Palermo again only much later, in the metal pictures made in New York. There is no definitive answer to the question of whether Palermo failed to understand LeWitt or whether he was mocking him. Regardless, it seems Palermo did understand that LeWitt's concepts amounted to a dead end for a young German artist. Indeed, Gerhard Richter recalls the "hard, bad times" when he and Palermo felt they had been "written off" as conceptual art took hold. Palermo's conceptual art was over before it had really begun.[31]

WITHIN THE WALL PAINTINGS

Palermo made two versions of his second wall

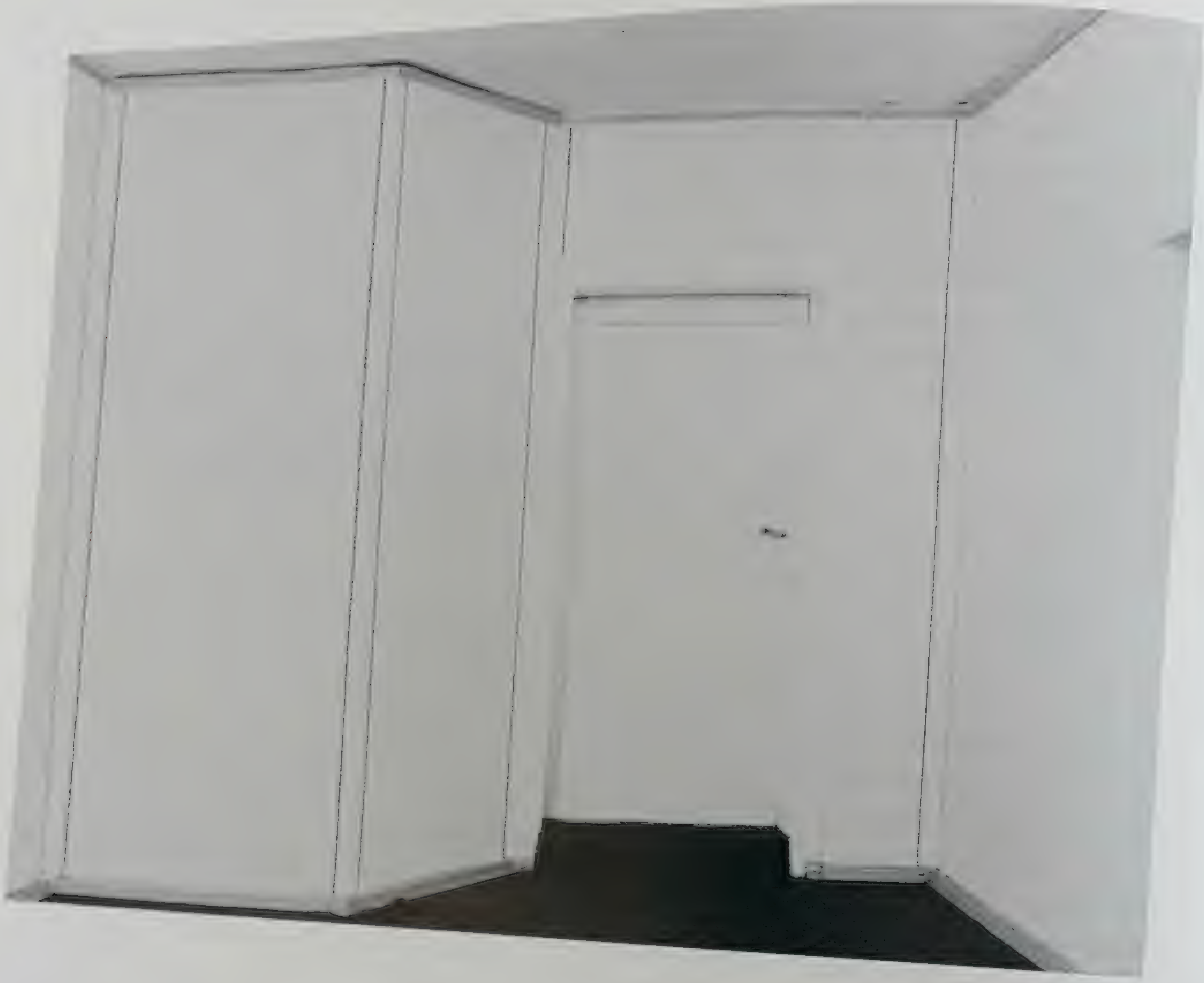


Fig. 73 *Modell: Wandzeichnung mit Musik* (Model: Wall Drawing with Music), Galerie René Block, Berlin, for exhibition series *Blockade '69*, 28 March–15 April 1969. Oil crayon on walls, space: 400 (max.) x c. 700 cm.

drawing in the winter and spring of 1969. The first appeared at the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, off the beaten track in Bremerhaven, an important, then barely two-year-old independent exhibition space for contemporary, especially conceptual, art.[32] The second version followed at the Galerie René Block in Berlin, which had developed strong ties to Joseph Beuys and other Düsseldorf artists since its founding in 1964 (figs. 73, 74). In both Palermo responded to the galleries' idiosyncratic sequences of walls. In the Berlin gallery the walls were joined at varying angles, unfolding like an accordion around the circumference of the room. Wherever walls met, Palermo drew two thin lines with red-brown oil crayon (*Pastellkreide*) extending from floor to ceiling on either side of the joint. As photographs and a film made by the local television station Sender Freies Berlin show, this alteration enhanced the awkward, strange qualities of the space.[33] The lines mimicked the vertical edges of the walls, but, though drawn thinly and lightly, they were more easily visible than the actual joints. In effect, each corner appeared to be flattened out and virtually disappeared, rendering the exact demarcations of the space uncertain. The rhythm of lines compelled the viewer to walk along the walls—Palermo referred to the piece as an *Abwicklung*, "unfolding"—repeating this illusion over and over.[34] Palermo reportedly talked about the earlier, Bremerhaven version of this work as an *Aktivierung des Raums*, "activation of space."[35] The vertical lines in both locations created a heightened, activated sense of space through the defamiliarization of the space by means of the optical illusions that enhanced viewers' spatial, perceptual, and bodily consciousness. Sensitivity to and reflection on their surroundings replaced the obliviousness with which viewers usually regarded the space in which they stood.

In the Berlin version, that defamiliarization was framed within a historical context. Palermo's work was the second in a yearlong exhibition series featuring rooms by, in chronological order, Joseph Beuys, Palermo, K. H. Hödicke, Panamarenko, Bernd Lohaus, Imi Giese, Imi Knoebel, Reiner Ruthenbeck,

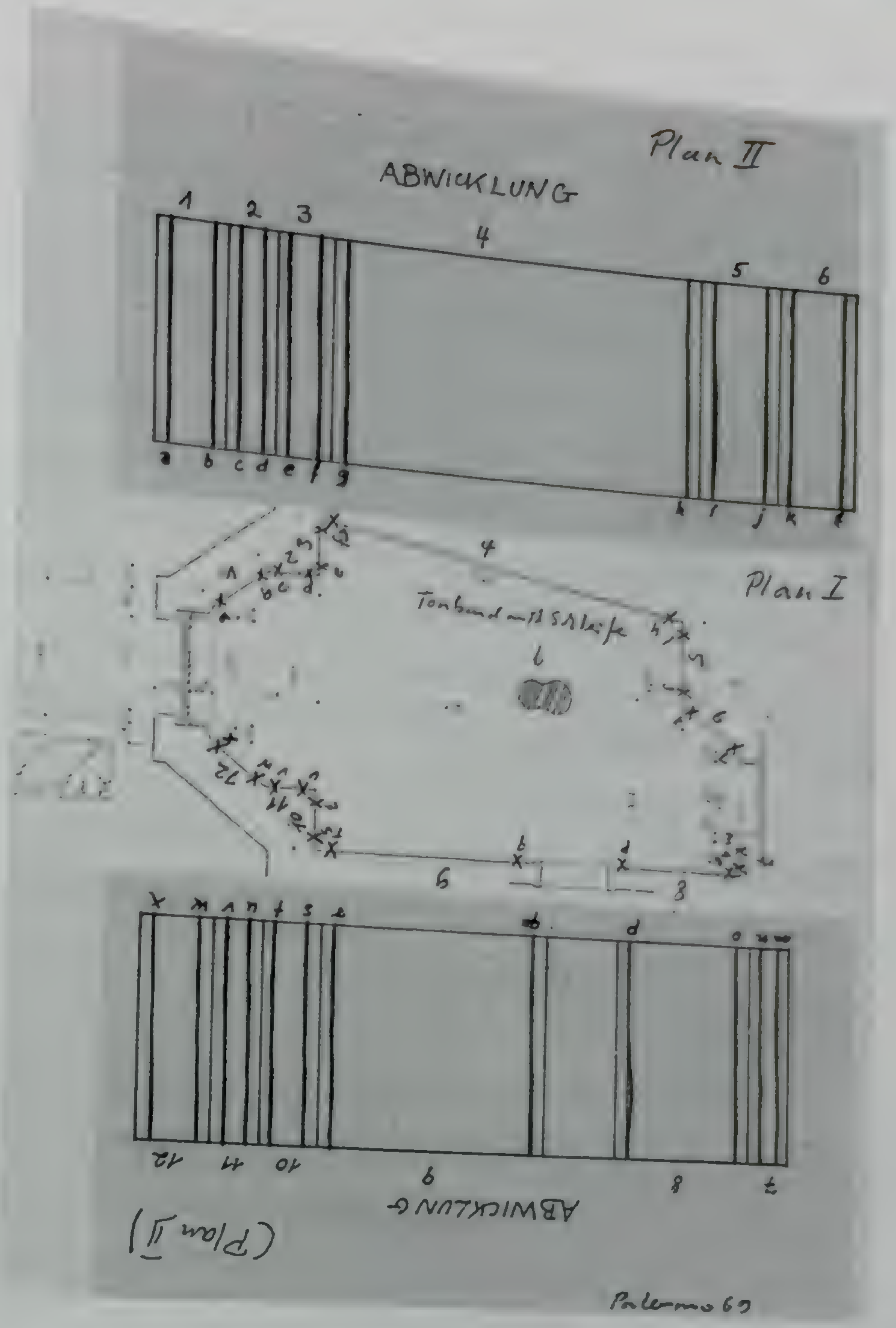


Fig. 74 Sketch for *Modell: Wandzeichnung mit Musik* (Model: Wall Drawing with Music) (*Wvz* 520), Galerie René Block, Berlin, for exhibition series *Blockade '69*, 28 March–15 April 1969. Two pen drawings on drafting paper glued on paper with photocopied plan, 29.8 x 21 cm. Block Collection, Berlin.

and Sigmar Polke. The title of the series, *Blockade*, triggered memories of the yearlong Berlin blockade twenty years earlier during the Cold War, when from mid-1948 to mid-1949 the Soviet Union had cut off all land and sea access to West Berlin, forcing the Allied powers to supply the population with food and all other necessities by air. Most subsequent exhibitions in the series followed up on the ideas presented in Palermo's work and created works with a historically resonant but always abstract spatial uncertainty that alluded to spatial separation, inaccessibility, or transition—Hödicke's *Drehkreuze*, or "turnstiles"; Panamarenko's *One-Seat Projekt*, suggesting an airplane; Lohaus's blocked entrance; and Ruthenbeck's crowded installation consisting of configurations of three lengths of lumber tied together in star shapes.[36]

This defamiliarizing effect, though not the explicit historical reference, is central to Palermo's wall paintings and drawings: by destabilizing the viewer's perceptual and bodily orientation, they encouraged reflection about our dependence on space and its relevance to our understanding of the surrounding world. The wall paintings are phenomenological: they posit experience as our means of knowing the world and ourselves. As noted by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "spatial existence is the primary condition of all living perception."[37] Space is not an empty container disconnected from the subject, nor is it a condition that allows the subject's experience. Rather, space and subject are inseparable and equal partners in a dynamic relationship that brings both into being. A stable, secure relationship to one's surroundings depends on its having clearly determined spatial characteristics. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "My body is geared onto the world when my perception presents me with a spectacle as varied and as clearly articulated as possible. . . . This maximum sharpness of perception and action points clearly to a perceptual *ground*, a basis of my life, a general setting in which my body can co-exist with the world." If our everyday spatial experience is altered, we initially feel unstable, insecure, but eventually that disorientation helps us recognize the characteristics of spatial experience itself. "The possession of a body implies the ability to change levels and to 'understand' space." If we were to experience perceptual and bodily instability —produced, for example, through retinal inversion or the simulation of movement in an inverted space —we would eventually regain stability ("the perceptual field corrects itself"), and the result would be that we would experience a new relationship to space: "I identify it without any concept because I live in it, because I am borne wholly into the new spectacle, and, so to speak, transfer my sense of gravity into it."[38] This new relationship was what Palermo was aiming at: although some of the wall paintings generate a sense of stability, Palermo clearly preferred effects of instability.

Visitors to the Berlin and Bremerhaven exhibitions would have been further puzzled by the accompanying music. In a letter to his Berlin dealer René Block, Palermo referred to "a tape that continuously plays the piano piece with text *Modell op. 30* by Henning Christiansen." The contemporary Danish composer and visual artist had been associated with Fluxus, and Palermo probably met him through Beuys, who collaborated with Christiansen on several performances, including the 1966 *Manresa*, discussed in Chapter 1, and *Konzert*, Beuys's contribution to the *Blockade* exhibition, which preceded Palermo's. "This piece," Palermo continued, "is made concrete through my intervention, as it comes from an imaginary space into your concrete space and hence enforces my intentions."[39] As recorded in the television film, it features a voice repeating the words "hier von und dazu," accompanied by minimal piano chords. Most of these words have multiple meanings: *hier* means "here"; *von* "from," "of," "by," or "about"; and *dazu* can be roughly translated as "for the purpose," "therefore," "for this," "besides," "in addition," "together," or "with." The rhythm is simple: *hier* is a quarter note, *von* is three eighth notes, *und* is one eighth note, *da* and *zu* are a quarter note each.[40]

How did Palermo make this music "concrete"? The composer had already "concretized" language, as it were, stressing its material qualities in a way similar to concrete poetry, by isolating prepositions from nouns that would determine their meaning. The longer one listens, the more meaningless these words become; they are pure sounds arranged in a melodic rhythm. If Palermo's wall drawing "concretized" Christiansen's music, it was not by giving meaning to his words. On the contrary, the drawing enforced the uncertainty of the words and suggested multiple meanings: *hier* could be the "here" of the speaker or the viewer; *von* is a "from" that is spatially and temporally undetermined; and *dazu* leaves open what is added to what—viewer to space, space to viewer, lines to space, line to line, viewer to line. These multiple meanings foregrounded the materiality of the words and thus made the composition concrete. Wall drawing and music worked in tandem to defamiliarize the experience of the exhibition visitors.

That effect became more visual several months later in *Tuchverspannung*, which can be poorly translated as "cloth bracing," one of two adjacent room installations for Palermo's exhibition *2 Räume, Tuchverspannung und Wandzeichnung* (2 Rooms: Cloth Bracing and Wall Drawing) at the Galerie Ernst in Hanover (fig. 75). Palermo stretched a band of yellow-orange cotton, probably the same kind as the piece used earlier that year for the cloth picture *Leisesprecher I*, diagonally from wall to floor in one corner of the room and from wall to ceiling in the opposite corner, thus concealing the right angles where the walls met floor and ceiling.[41] A visitor to the exhibition described losing his balance while walking through the space, comparing the experience to being on a slowly tilting ship deck. Another wrote, "The room lost its customary proportions and looked as if it were about to keel over. In this way the viewer's normal sense of space is dramatically disturbed and the viewer himself is left with a feeling of insecurity."[42] That effect, in which the room seemed to keel to the left as one entered, resulted from our usual horizontal anchor of body and vision being supplanted by the diagonal axis spanning the space between the two bands—an axis Palermo marked with an arrow in one of three documentary sketches. The keeling effect was particularly pronounced because the fabric covered a larger segment of the wall than of the ceiling. Even the photograph in Palermo's documentation, which reproduces the viewpoint of the visitor entering the gallery space, compels us to tilt our head to the left to adjust for a disturbed sense of balance. Suitably, if probably unintentionally, Palermo's axonometric projection of the room as a small box in that documentation tilts ever so slightly to the left, as well. As I shall discuss in Chapter 5, this particular type of spatial disorientation created by occluding spatial parameters was pushed further two years later in a collaborative wall work with Imi Knoebel at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden entitled *Veränderter Raum* (Altered Room; see figs. 139 and 140).[43]

Whether to balance the overall installation in the Hanover exhibition or to enrich the viewers' spatial experiences, Palermo created a contrasting sense of stability in the gallery space adjacent to *Tuchverspannung*.[44] Although, for unknown reasons, he documented the second wall drawing with only a single drawing, some photographs of it have survived (fig. 76). A reviewer confirms that the fragment visible in one of these is representative of the whole room: a dark blue line made of oil crayon "exactly follows, at a slight distance, the contours of the door, windows, and heater," describing a straightforward articulation of the room's boundaries.[45] Palermo essentially developed and expanded the tracing of the vertical joint he had made in the Berlin and Bremerhaven exhibitions, now tracing the outlines of all the wall surfaces. Within half a year of his initial false start in working with this new medium, then, Palermo had laid the groundwork for a new body of work that would occupy him for the next four years. Along with the use of found, often decorative shapes, the wall circumscription and the monochrome plane featured in the Galerie Ernst

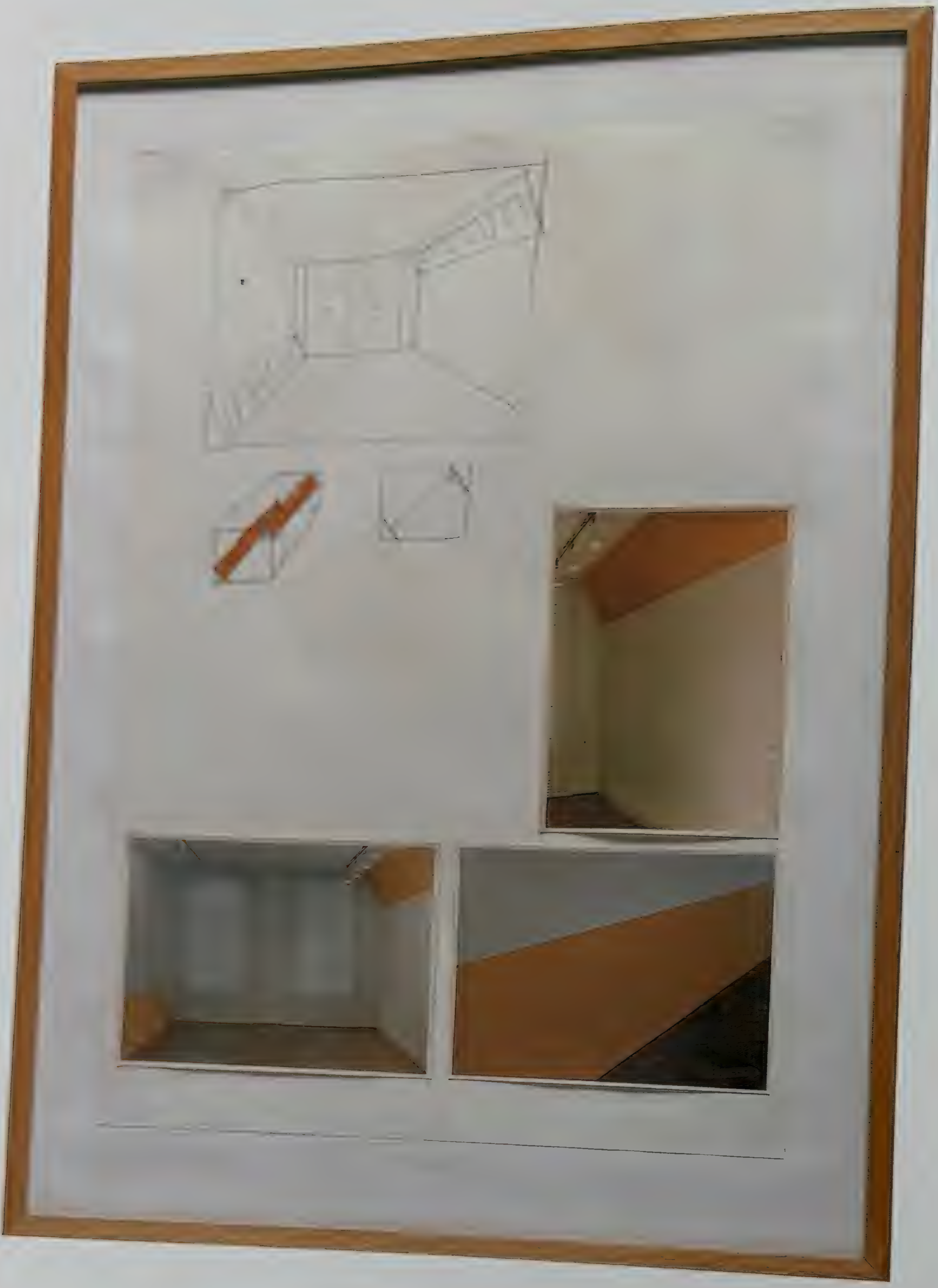
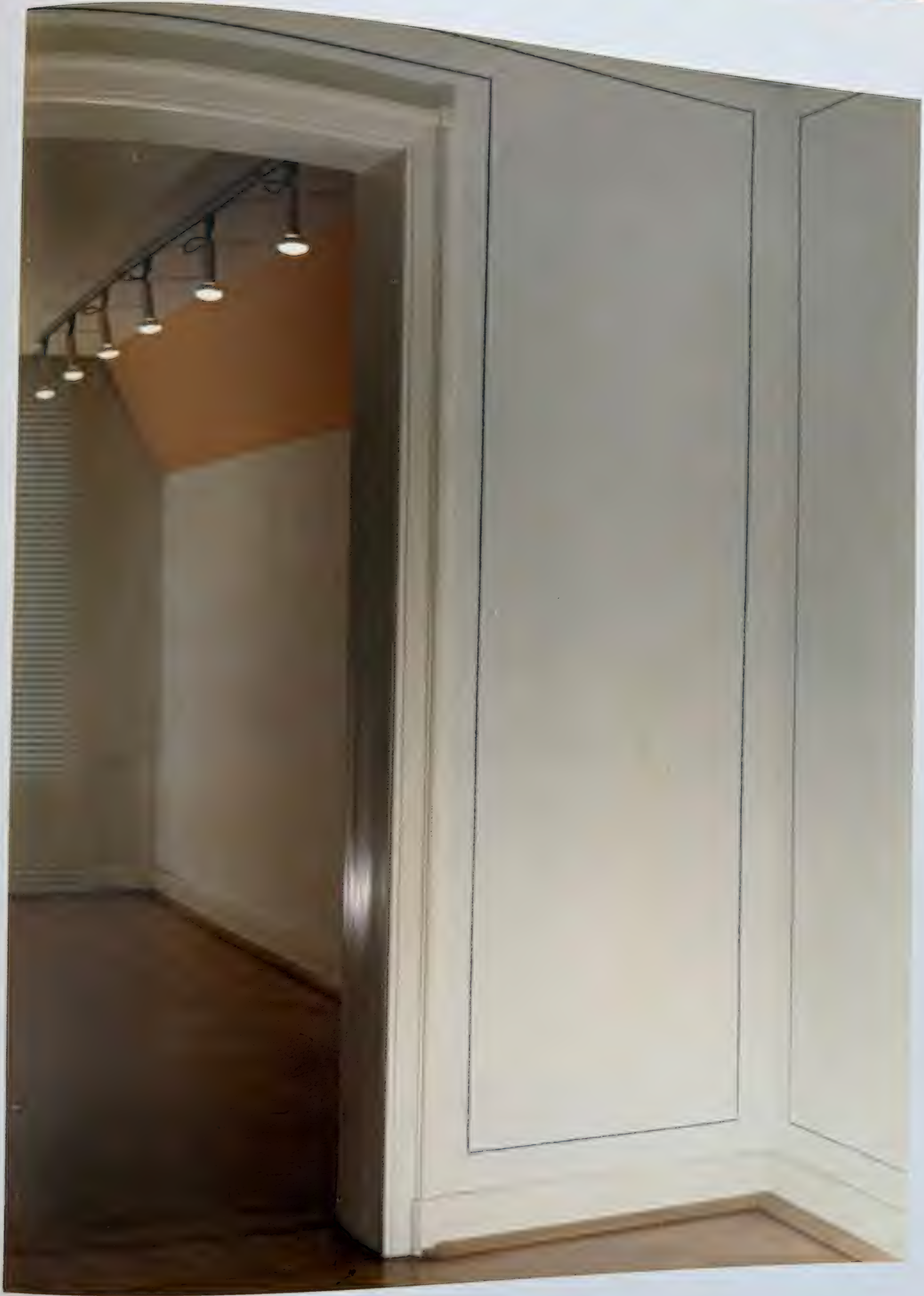


Fig. 75 Documentation for *Tuchverspannung* (Cloth Bracing) (*Wvz* 583), Galerie Ernst, Hanover, 6–29 June 1969. Pencil and felt pen on paper with three photographs, all on cardboard, 90 x 66 cm. Kunstmuseum Bonn.

opposite

Fig. 76 *2 Räume, Tuchverspannung und Wandzeichnung* (2 Rooms: Cloth Bracing and Wall Drawing), Galerie Ernst, Hanover, 6–29 June 1969. Front room: oil crayon on wall, 450 x 600 cm; back room: cotton over wooden slat construction, 450 x 750 cm.



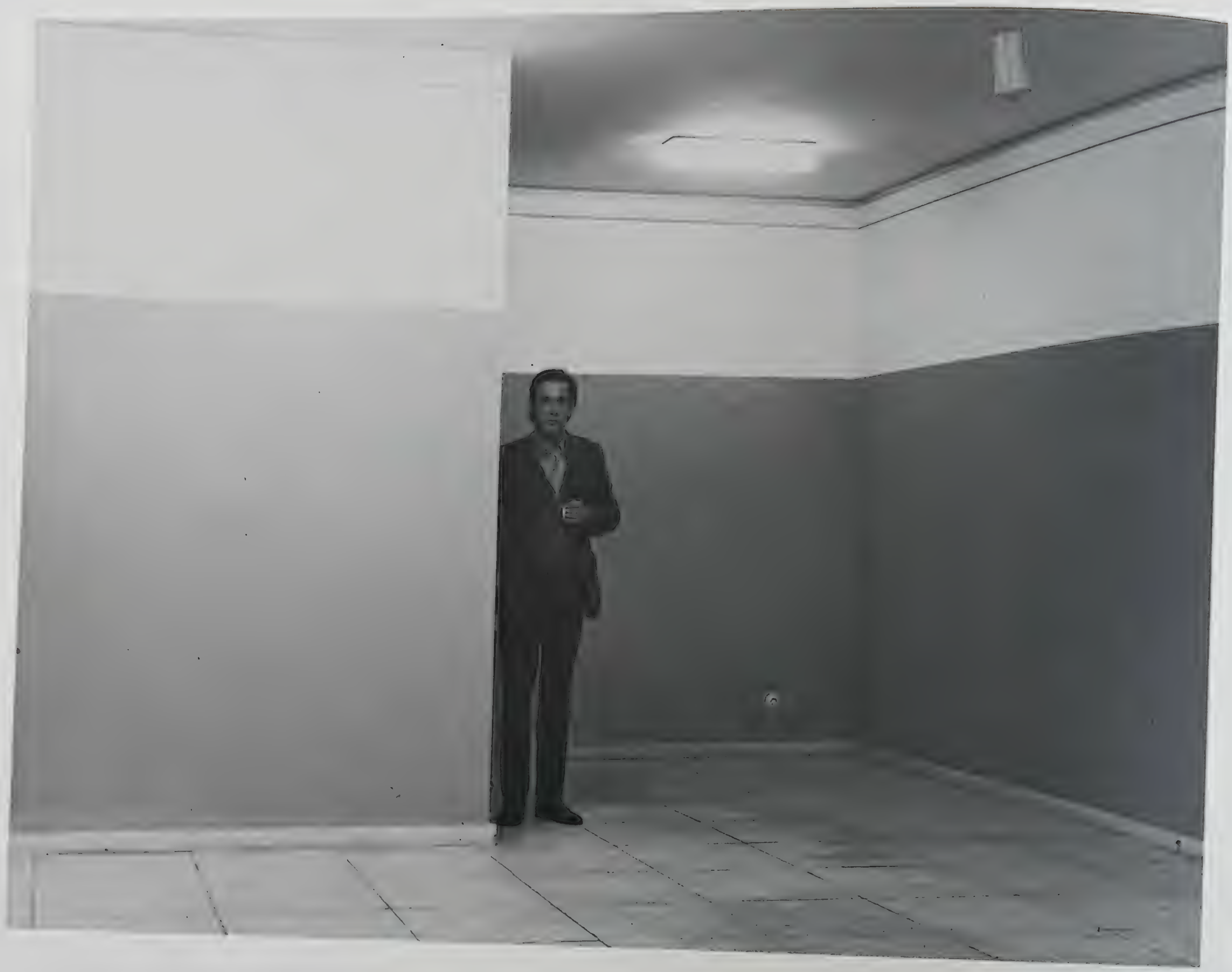


Fig. 77 Palermo standing by *Wandmalerei* (Wall Painting), Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven, 20 November–9 January 1971. Wall paint on wall, room: 450 (max.) x 814 (max.) cm. Photograph © 2007 Jürgen Wesseler, Bremerhaven.

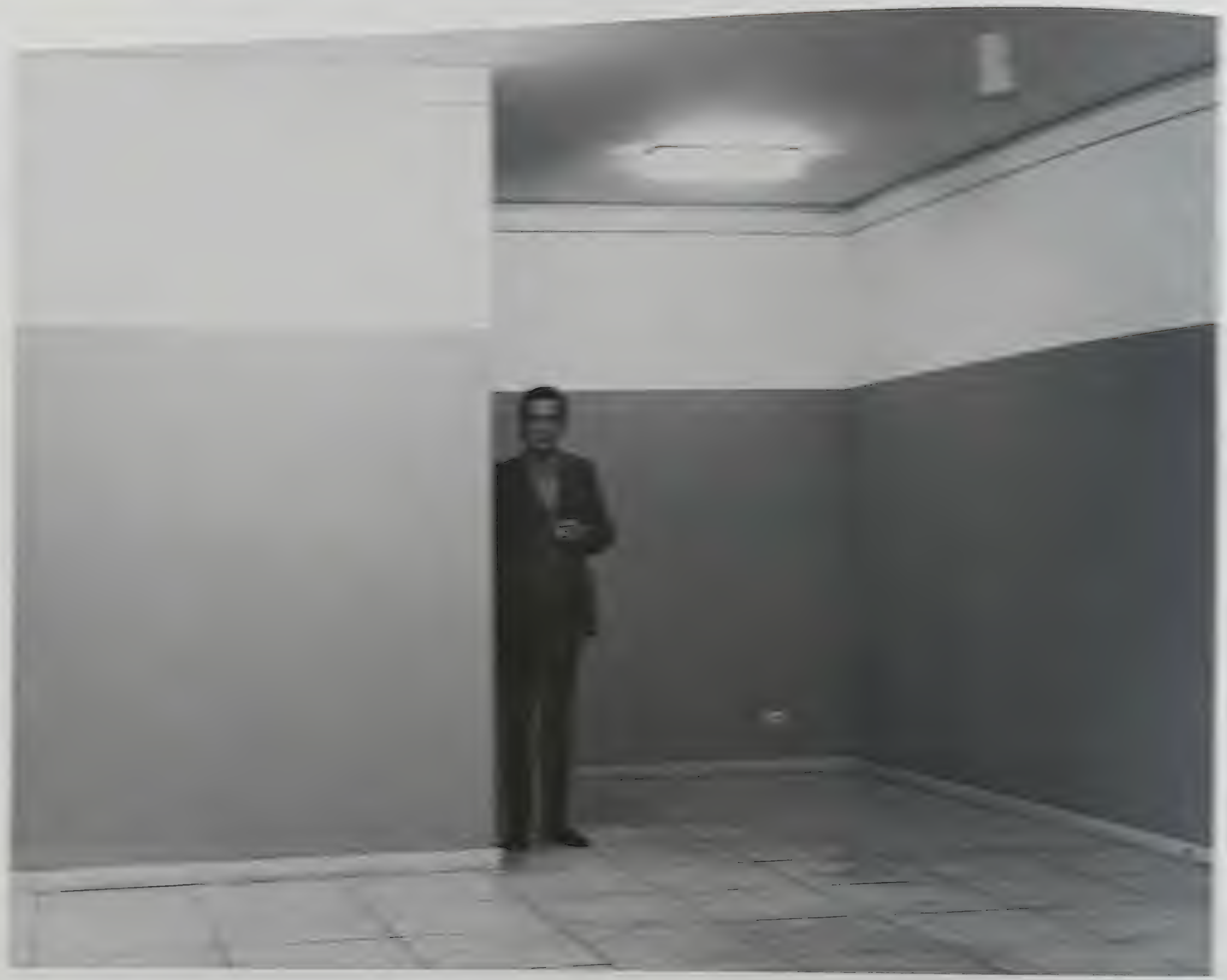


Fig. 37 Palermo standing by Wandmalerei (Wall Painting), Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven, 20 November–8 January 1971. Wall paint on wall, room: 450 (max.) x 814 (max.) cm. Photograph © 2007 Jürgen Wesseler, Bremerhaven.

exhibition became central motifs in Palermo's wall paintings.[46] They were soon used for unsettling effects in more sophisticated ways, and in his best work the two motifs were collapsed into one.

Palermo never again used cloth in an installation, perhaps because it did not blend in enough with the architecture. But in *Tuchverspannung* the artist did indulge his passion for color, for the first time in this body of work.[47] Central to his cloth pictures and the later metal pictures, color increasingly appeared in the later years of the wall paintings in the form of colored lines or expansive monochrome fields. For another wall painting at the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, on view from December 1971 to January 1972, Palermo used a "mild gray" paint (as one reviewer described it and as it appears in a related silkscreen) to cover the bottom two-thirds of three walls (the fourth wall was the glassed storefront), reaching a little above the average height of a man (fig. 77).[48] As the walls merged with the similarly colored floor, the gray fields would enclose visitors; from all sides of the perceptual field, the walls would push them back toward the window in a nearly claustrophobic manner. The white space above eye level would have appeared spacious and immaterial by contrast, further enhancing the constraining effect of the gray.

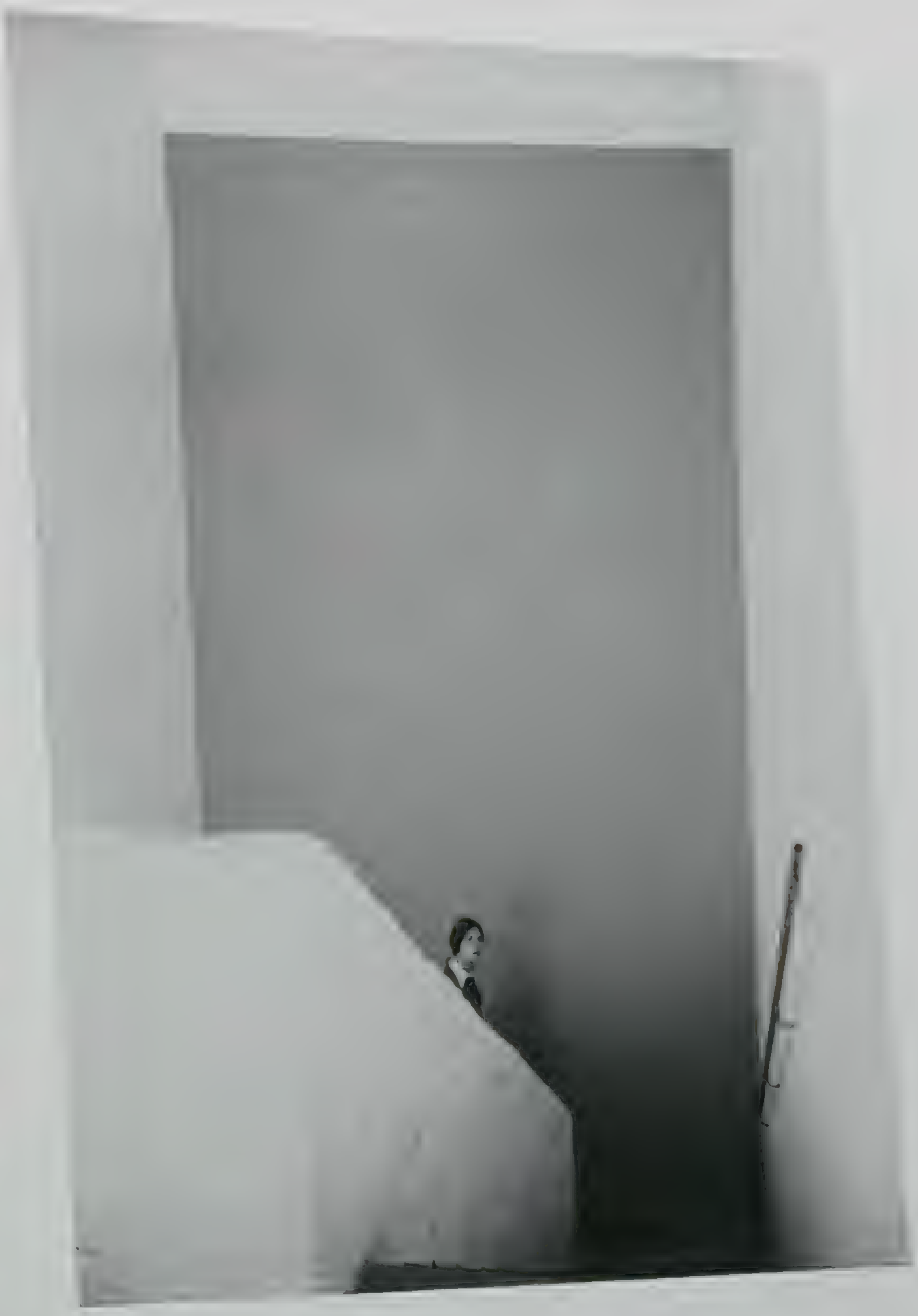


Fig. 78 *Wandmalerei mit Bleimennige* (Wall Painting with Rust-Preventive Undercoating) at Documenta 5, Kassel, 30 June–8 October 1972. Rust-preventive undercoating on wall.

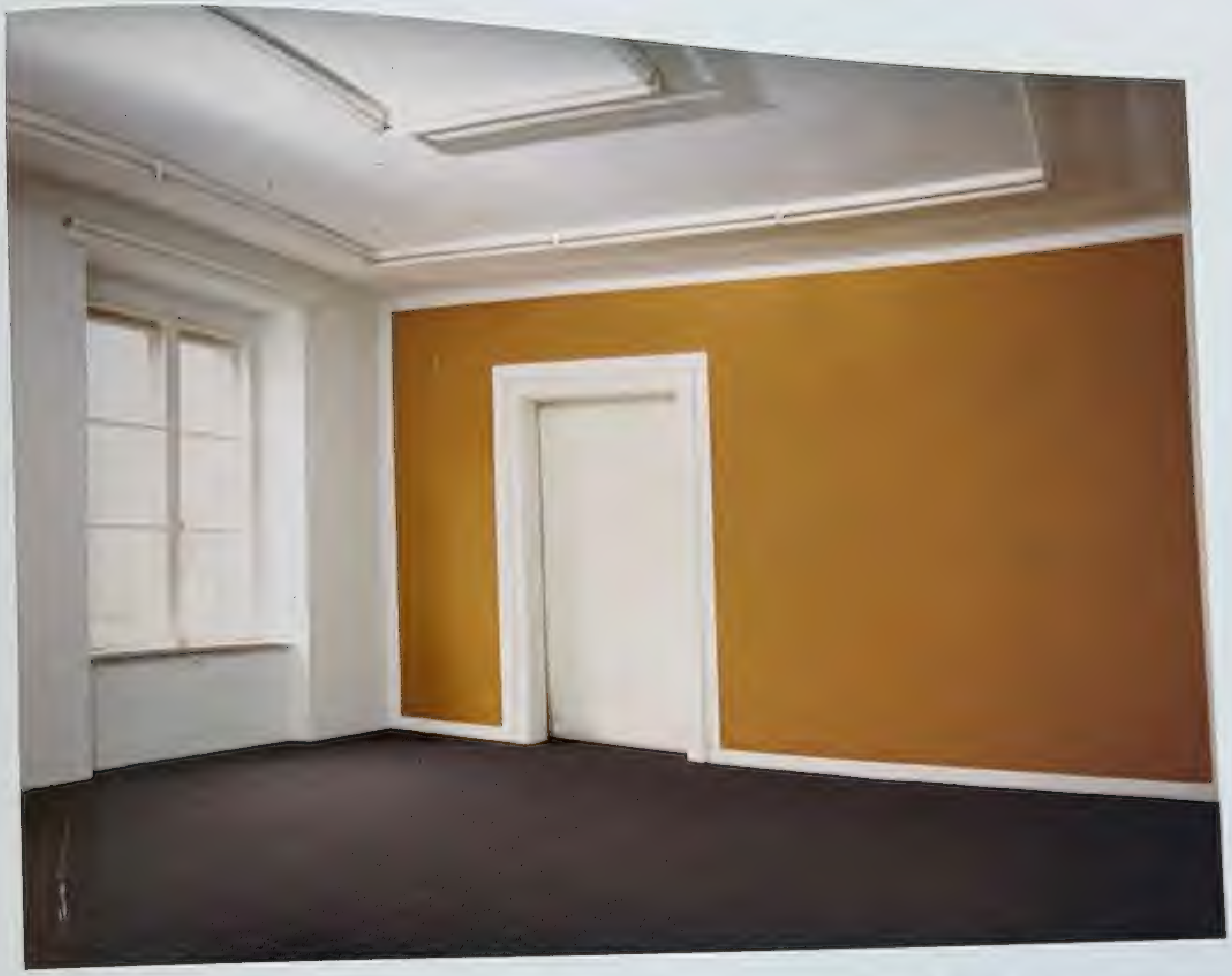
For Documenta 5 in 1972, Palermo painted the tall narrow wall facing a landing in a central stairwell with *Bleimennige*, a bright orange rust-preventive undercoating, thus in effect taking the wall out of its context and rupturing the unity of the space (fig. 78). Separated from the adjacent white walls by its color, the painted wall formed an isolated plane. As the low viewpoint chosen for the documentation suggests, the shape of the wall also appeared distorted to ascending or descending viewers, and, we can assume, its appearance changed with every step. Because Palermo left some of the original white wall at the top, the orange shape oscillated ambiguously between ground and figure: between being an orange wall and being an orange shape placed on the wall. The types of paint added a conceptual dimension to this ambiguity. Because both white paint and undercoating are commonly used as grounds rather than as objects in themselves, Palermo effectively put two grounds in irresolvable conflict with each other.[49] These spatial uncertainties would have been intensified by the fact that visitors were inevitably in the process of climbing or descending stairs—even switching directions on the landing immediately in front of the work—when they encountered Palermo's wall painting.

Staircases, it seems, particularly lent themselves to the heightened spatial experience Palermo pursued because by their nature they stressed the idea of a body moving through space. By the time he painted *Wandmalerei mit Bleimennige* (Wall Painting with Rust-Preventive Undercoating) the artist had been drawn to staircases as a site for his wall paintings for several years, starting with a work at Galerie Konrad Fischer in April 1970 and continuing that August at the College of Art in Edinburgh and at the Kunstverein in Frankfurt the following year. Each of these works involved a staircase as a motif or location, and in most of them the staircase gradually shifted or abruptly changed direction, thus intensifying their inherent propensity to shift and hence heighten—and sometimes destabilize—the viewer's perception.

Palermo's *Wandmalerei auf gegenüberliegenden Wänden* (Wall Painting on Facing Walls) is commonly referred to as the "positive/negative" wall painting. His fifth exhibition at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich, it was on view from February to March 1971, and it embodies in a complex, condensed way what we might call the phenomenological core of the wall paintings (fig. 79). The work formed the culminating piece in a series of wall circumscriptions that Palermo developed into a signature motif and that were clearly central to his thinking on walls. Growing out of the vertical lines drawn along vertical wall joints in Bremerhaven and Berlin and explored in a series of drawings on paper, the circumscription of a complete wall was first realized at the Galerie Ernst in Hanover in the form of a drawn line. Variations on the motif were executed in 1970 and 1971: related linear interventions at the Edinburgh College of Art and the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, a circumscription of the ceiling in another wall drawing for the Galerie Ernst in a collaborative exhibition with Gerhard Richter, and the complete circumscription of one or several walls, probably at the Lisson Gallery in London, in Palermo's studio in Mönchengladbach, in a private apartment in Darmstadt, in the wall painting on facing walls at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich, and in another collaborative exhibition with Richter at Galerie Heiner Friedrich's Cologne branch.[50] In the gallery's Munich space, Palermo painted one wall of the central room ocher; this was framed by a white band running around wall and door of a "hand's breadth"—in keeping with his phenomenological concerns, Palermo described the breadth of his wall circumscriptions not in abstract metric measurements but in relation to the human body.[51] He then reversed the color scheme on the facing wall. With minimal means Palermo thus created what curator Ludwig Rinn, in one of the few comprehensive essays published on Palermo's art during the artist's lifetime, described as an "intensive experience of space." More specifically, we can hypothesize based on extensive photographic documentation that Palermo destabilized the visitors' spatial experience. The two facing walls fragmented the space in a way similar to the Documenta work because adjacent walls and ceiling lacked their unifying links. Because they themselves were out of place, they destroyed the sense of place a room customarily generates. The white and ocher fields further created visual effects similar to those of the gray walls in Bremerhaven, perhaps more intensely because the frames roughly coincided with the periphery of the visitors' vision. The darker, ocher wall appeared to move forward, out of its white frame toward the viewer, while the white wall seemed to open out and pull the viewer in.

UTOPIAN ENVIRONMENTS

Palermo was not the only one to exhibit rooms in



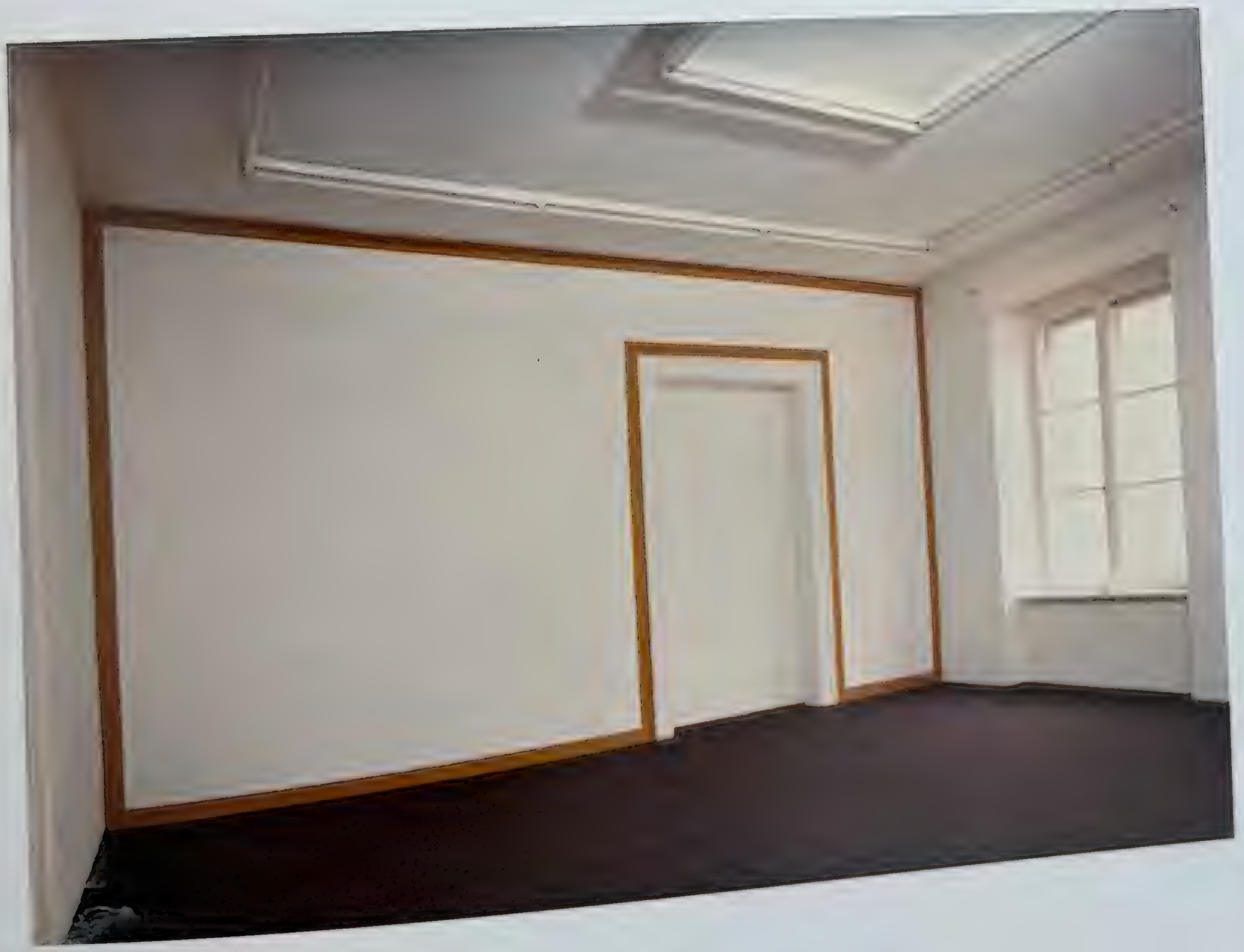
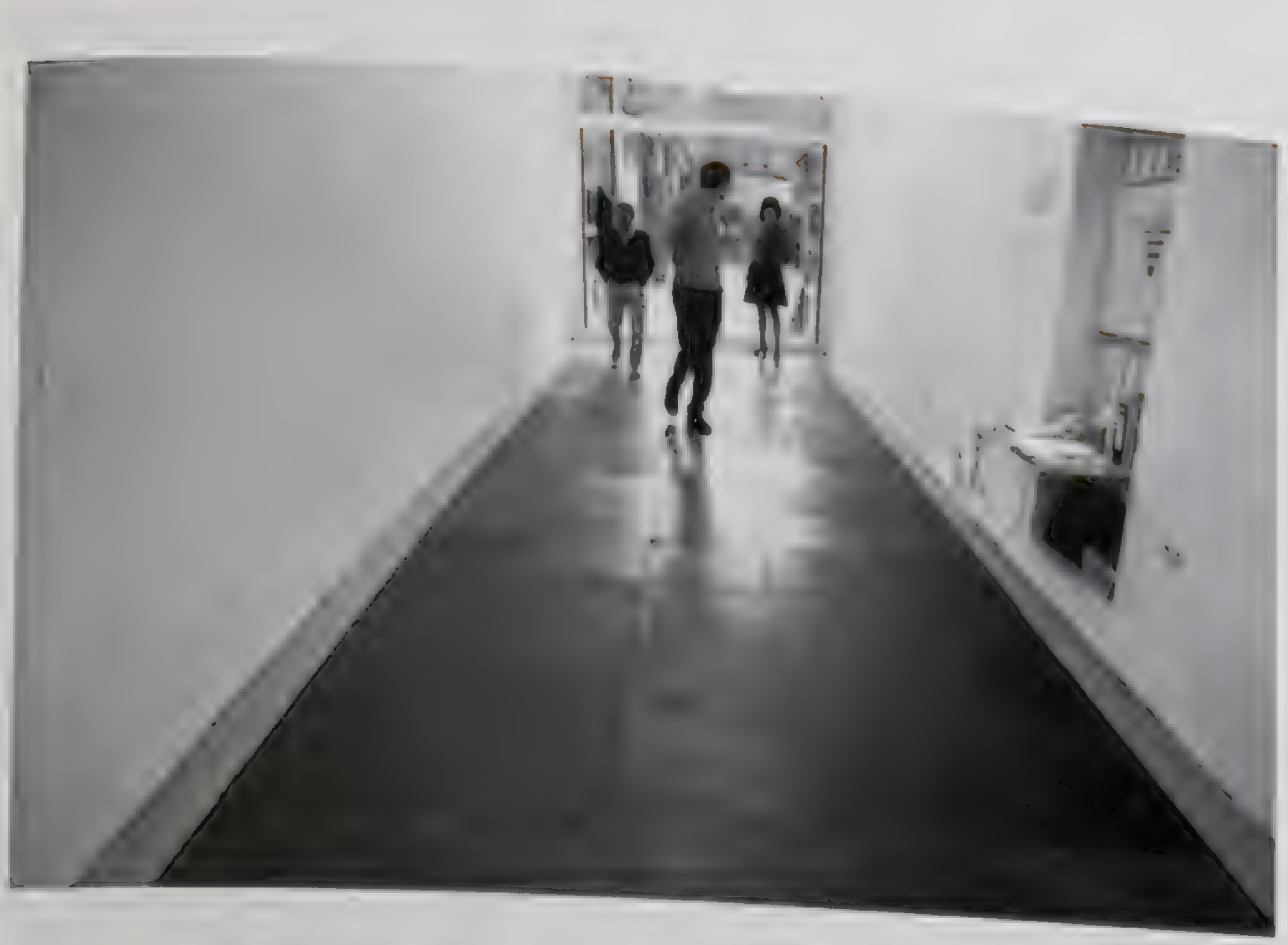


Fig. 79 *Wandmalerei auf gegenüberliegenden Wänden* (Wall Painting on Facing Walls), Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich, 15 February–3 March 1971. Wall paint on walls, room: 606 x 650 cm.

late 1968, nor was he the only one to foreground a phenomenological understanding of and a heightened sensitivity to space. With American art still at the center of the postwar art canon, we might think of minimalist explorations of the body and objects in space continuing in the work of the post-minimalists and leading to the critical investigations of space by conceptual artists. After a brief cross-Atlantic delay, this art was exhibited in German cities in the late 1960s: an extensive survey, *Minimal Art*, traveled to Düsseldorf in early 1969; key minimalist objects by Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, and Robert Morris were prominently featured at Documenta 4 in the summer of 1968 (see fig. 108); and Konrad Fischer opened his Düsseldorf gallery in October 1967 with Carl Andre's *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle* (fig. 80), followed in the next three years by another Andre exhibition (*Alloy Squares*), a Flavin exhibition (fluorescent objects), a Judd exhibition (woodcuts), two exhibitions of LeWitt (sections of *Serial Project No. 1* and a wall drawing), a Bochner exhibition (the measurement room mentioned earlier), and a Bruce Nauman exhibition (*Acoustic Wall*).[52] Yet the phenomenological subtext central to the thinking of these American artists and their critics completely escaped their German audiences, who were therefore unable to see any kinship between the American works and the phenomenological concerns of Palermo's wall paintings.

Instead, Palermo's wall paintings were received as part of a European craze for "environments." Artists produced and curators commissioned work that, in keeping with the etymology of the term, "encircled" their viewers. An important precedent on continental ground had been Yves Klein's legendary 1958 *Le Vide* (The Emptiness) at Galerie Iris Clert in Paris, a work well known in Germany because of Klein's connection to Zero art and Galerie Schmela. Following Otto Herbert Hajek's 1963 *Begehbare Plastik* (Walkable Sculpture) exhibited at Documenta 3, the medium played a prominent role at Documenta 4—for example, with Flavin's signature fluorescent light tubes installed along the edges of the walls of a darkened space and Christo's *Corridor Store Front*. Complete exhibitions were devoted to the theme: *12 Environments* in Bern, *Vier Räume* (Four Rooms) in Munich, *Structures gonflables* (Inflatable Structures) and *Le Décor quotidien de la vie en 1968* (The Everyday Decoration of Life in 1968) in Paris, all in 1968, and *Räume und Environments* (Rooms and Environments) in Leverkusen in 1969.[53] These included, for example, rooms filled with fog by the Zero painter Gotthard Graubner, or with foam rubber by the Zero sculptor Ferdinand Spindel (fig. 81). In both cases the space's geometric markers were playfully obscured. Spindel's folds of foam rubber created surreal, cavelike spaces with no solid ground; viewers would lose their balance, fall softly, and get up again. Graubner's fog rooms—once exhibited with one of Palermo's wall paintings in a group exhibition of young Düsseldorf artists in Edinburgh—made air visible and effectively blinded visitors, forcing them to rely on other senses. As Graubner explained, the "fog, which of course is to be perceived sensually, really demands participation of all senses in a condensed way. Sensibility is thus activated to the highest degree."[54]

To be sure, there was an American reference point to European environments, but it was not minimalism or its use of phenomenology, as one might expect. Rather, European critics adopted the term *environments* from Allan Kaprow, who used it to describe art that filled "entire containing areas, nearly obliterating the ruled definition of the rooms" and that incorporated the spectator as an "important physical component."[55] The latter aspect was central to the way environments were defined in Europe: as "a medium of expression in art taken from reality, a medium that succeeds in activating the viewers' consciousness through a complex use of their senses" and that engaged viewers in various activities such as thinking, moving, arranging, playing, touching, and smelling.[56] Some environments stressed the use of a full-scale room, others the participation of the viewer, but most focused on the interplay of room and viewer to enable a heightened sensual experience of space.



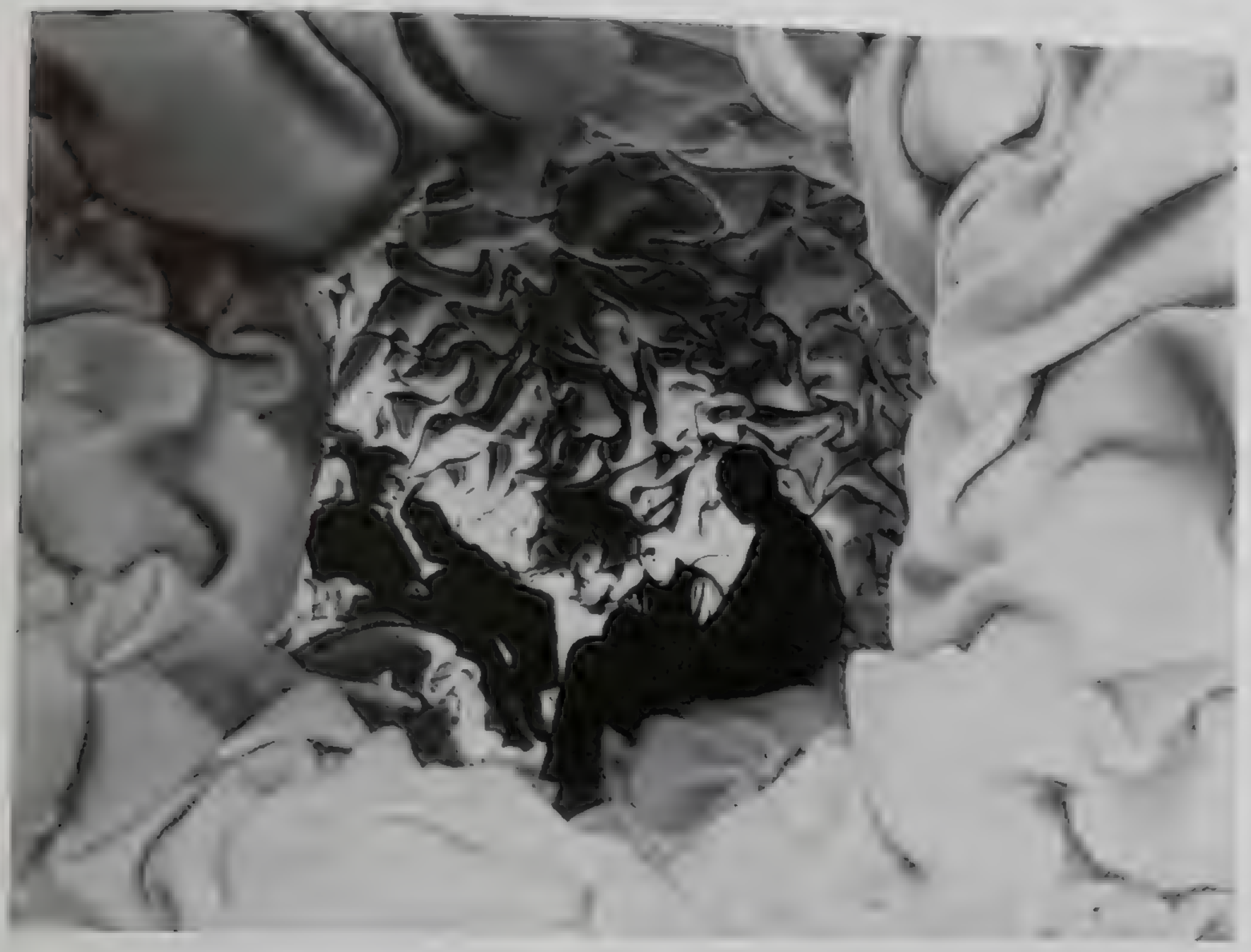
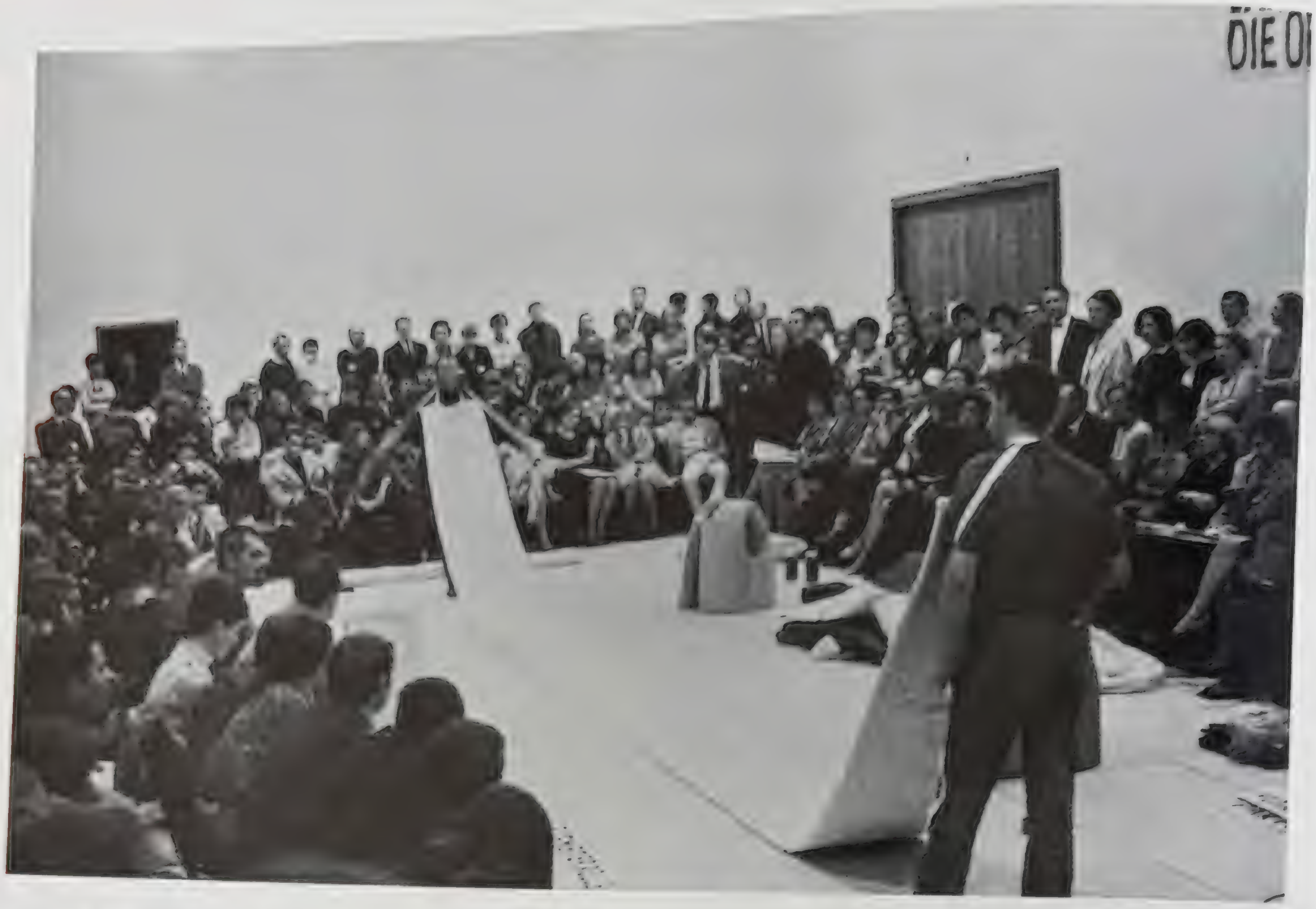


Fig. 80 Carl Andre, *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle*, as exhibited at Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf, 21 October–28 November 1967. Hot-rolled steel, 100 units, each 50 x 50 x 0.5 cm; overall 1,000 x 250 x 0.5 cm. Panza Collection, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. © Carl Andre/Licensed by VAGA, New York, N.Y.

Fig. 81 Ferdinand Spindel, *hole in home, schaumstoffhöhle rosa* (hole in home, foam-rubber cave pink) in *spindelschaumstoff objekte* exhibition at (op)art galerie hans mayer, Esslingen, 1966. © 2007 estate of Ferdinand Spindel.

Although rarely included in these discussions, the art of Franz Erhard Walther, who trained at the Düsseldorf academy a few years before Palermo, presented one of the more sophisticated and earliest approaches to the ideas underlying environment art. Walther's *1. Werksatz* (1. Work Set), made between 1963 and 1969, includes fifty-eight components, each consisting of various structures sewn from fabric. The work exists only when the viewer, or, in the artist's terminology, "actor," handles it, unfolding, experiencing, or using one of the components. As Walther notes, "What happens in the actual action (*Handlung*) is the constitution of the work."[57] Viewers engage with the various components of *1. Werksatz* by standing, lying, or rolling in them or by walking along them, either by themselves or in a group. In the process of doing so, they experience space and their bodies in an unusual and therefore more conscious way. For example, a group of people might actively construct a space by holding up a piece of cloth, or an individual might experience space reduced to a two-dimensional plane by rolling down a hill while wrapped in thick layers of fabric. When in May 1967 Walther and Sigmar Polke performed his *Elfmeterbahn* (Eleven-Meter Penalty Lane), part of *1. Werksatz* and originally made in 1964, at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Palermo was in the front row of the audience (fig. 82). He definitely took an interest in Walther's work, for it is closely related in concept and experience to the wall paintings; with respect to the cloth pictures, Walther's work was an important precedent for using fabric as an exclusive artistic material.

Environments and their popularity were fueled by the intense debates taking place in the German art world about the social and political role of art. These debates centered on five main concerns: efforts to democratize art, art making as a form of negation, art as agitation, a rejection of artistic practice altogether, and calls for the socialization of art.[58] Seeking to democratize art, artists and institutions worked to expand access to a broad population, a trend that gave rise to affordable multiples and art fairs, the



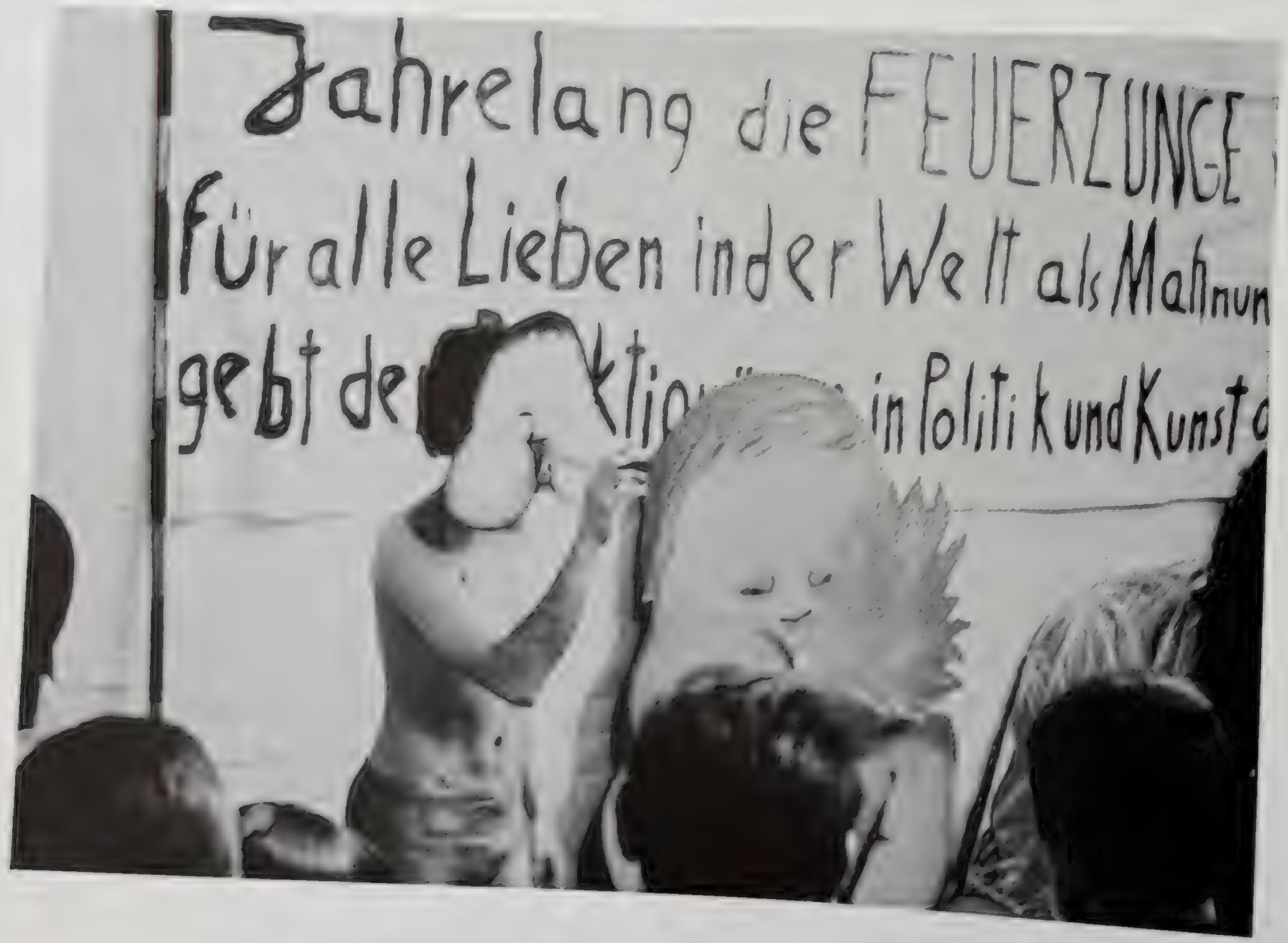

Jahrelang die FEUERZUNGE
für alle Lieben inder Welt als Mahnun
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Fig. 82 Franz Erhard Walther and Sigmar Polke performing Walther's *Elfmeterbahn (1. Werksatz)* (Eleven-Meter Penalty Lane [1. Work Set]), 1964, at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, May 1967

Fig. 83 Jörg Immendorff, *Die einzig respektable Waffe* (The Only Respectable Weapon), artist performance during German-Danish Days, Aachen, 15 April 1967. © 2007 Michael Werner Gallery, New York and Cologne, for Estate of Jörg Immendorff.

publication boom, and new forms of art education, such as Bazon Brock's *Besucherschule* (Visitors' School), first enacted at Documenta 4. Negational art sought to overcome stale conventions of art making and provoke its audiences, exemplified by the performances of Fluxus artists and, although he was still little known outside Germany, the young Jörg Immendorff (fig. 83). Agitational art went further, aiming to promote political education and change, using posters (Klaus Staeck) or montaged objects (Hans-Peter Alvermann) to comment critically on specific historical events or social conditions. The rejection of art altogether, as inherently elitist and apolitical, was voiced both from within the art world (Alvermann ceased to make art in 1966) and from without (most prominently in the public demonstrations against Documenta 4 and the critical reviews of it). The socialization of art focused on efforts to make art socially effective, to heighten communal consciousness and sense awareness, and to foster communication and participation. Much utopian jargon evolved, claims that "the incorporation of the reality of the surrounding necessarily and consequentially obliterates the border between art and life" or that "the new 'artless art' is on its way to overcoming inflexible forms and to leading to a new creativity of the masses."[59] Amid these vague generalizations, environments presented concrete examples of art that systematically pursued this socialization.

These positions within the German art world developed within the broader context of world events during 1968. Like the United States, France, and Italy, West Germany experienced a wave of political protests—demonstrations against capitalist structures, authoritarian thinking, and American imperialism and in favor of a critically engaged consciousness and greater social and political participation. In Germany the protesters became known as the *Ausserparlamentarische Opposition* (Extra-Parliamentary Opposition, commonly referred to as APO), a term introduced by the German student leader Rudi Dutschke in 1966. The APO had grown out of demonstrations in the late 1950s and early 1960s against nuclear armament and infringements of freedom of the press exemplified by an illegal order to search the offices of the magazine *Der Spiegel*. It gained increased notoriety with protests against the brutalities of the U.S.-led war in Vietnam, the stale bureaucracies and curricula of the universities, continuities with the National Socialist past in the form of state personnel and popular mindsets, biased press coverage, and other threats to the young democracy. The most serious of these threats were the move of the Social Democratic Party to the political center and its subsequent coalition with the right-wing Christian Democrats, and the so-called *Notstandsgesetze*, Emergency Laws, that permitted a temporary suspension of the constitution for internal security reasons (fig. 84).[60]

The European debates about art and politics were shaped not only by this immediate context but also by art-historical precedents in the early twentieth century. The utopian belief that art could heighten awareness of one's surroundings provided continuity with designs for rooms and wall paintings found in Russian constructivism, De Stijl, and the Bauhaus. Contemporary curators and critics knew these movements well. The *Räume und Environments* catalogue cited El Lissitzky and Kurt Schwitters as forefathers, and the Italian environment retrospective *Ambiente: Arte dal Futurismi alla body art* (Environments: Art from Futurism to Body Art; 1976) showed reconstructions of wall paintings by Vilmos Huszar, Wassily Kandinsky, Oskar Schlemmer, and others juxtaposed with contemporary environments by artists such as Daniel Buren, Robert Irwin, and Sol LeWitt.[61] Lissitzky's 1923 *Proun Room* received wide attention when a reconstruction toured Europe in 1965 as part of the artist's retrospective. The *Proun Room* heightened viewers' perception of space through painted wooden reliefs organized successively, according to the way one would see works during an exhibition visit—a long horizontal wooden stick, for example, emphasized the effect of spatial recession when one entered a room.[62]

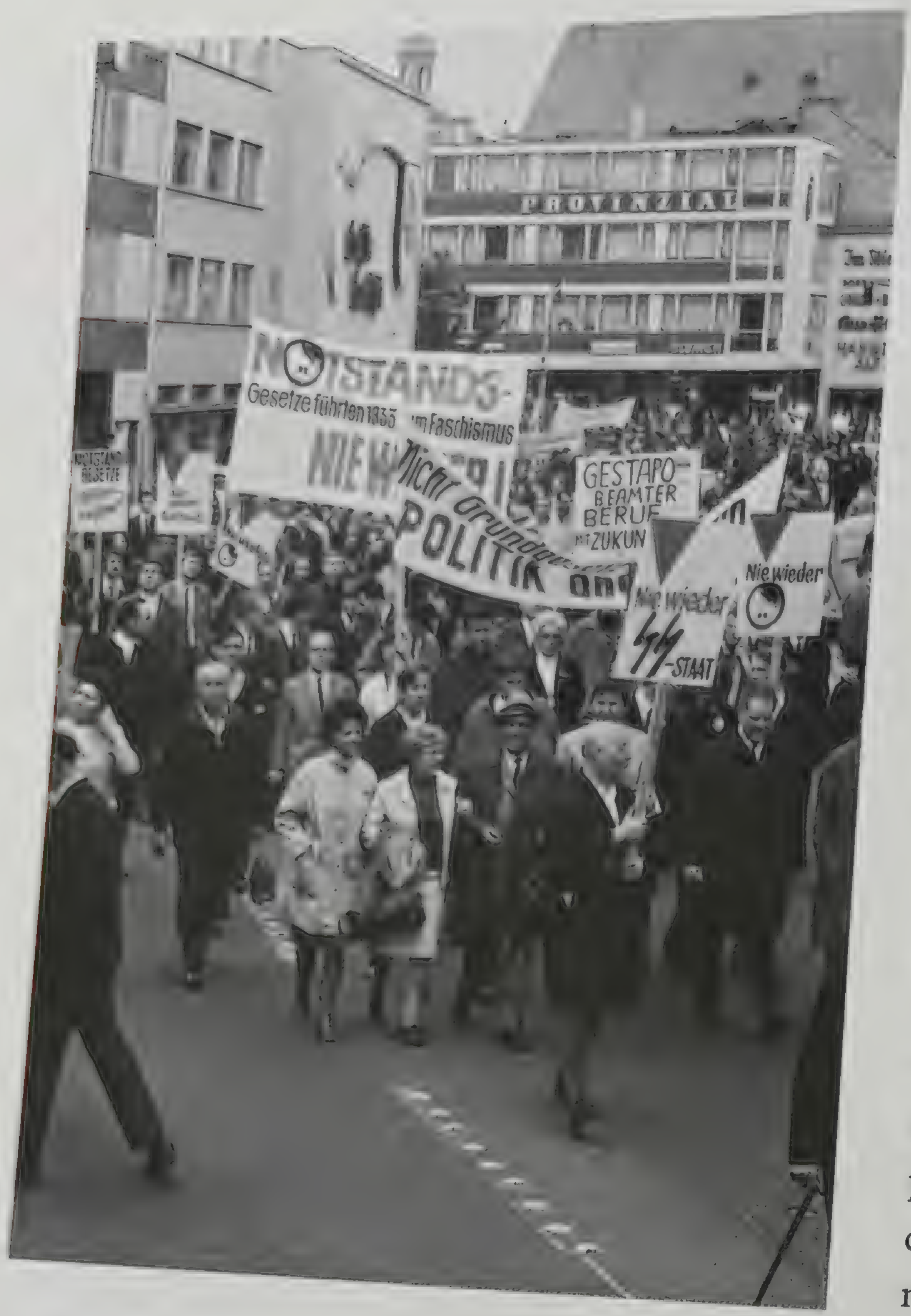


Fig. 84 *Sternmarsch* (Star March), demonstration against the Emergency Act, converging on Bonn, 11 May 1968. Photograph. © 2007 Federal Government of Germany.

opposite
Fig. 85 Joseph Beuys, *Luzerner Fettraum* (Lucerne Fat Room), at the exhibition *Düsseldorfer Szene* at the Kunstmuseum Luzern, June–July 1969

If both pre- and postwar environments were designed to enhance perceptual and spatial awareness in order to build a critical consciousness of the world, their means often differed. While many of the earlier examples were painted, in later works the artists proved themselves inventive in using unexpected materials such as fog and foam rubber. Kaprow had correctly traced the development of environment art to the medium of painting, although he had in mind artists like Pollock rather than Lissitzky. "This idea of a total art has grown from attempts to extend the possibilities of one of the forms of painting, collage, which has led us unknowingly toward rejecting painting in any form, without, however, eliminating the use of paint."[63] The postwar climate had grown indifferent, indeed hostile, to painting and its traditional, bourgeois connotations.

Palermo's use of painting did not, however, prevent his wall paintings from being associated with contemporaneous environment practices. The wall paintings were frequently commissioned and executed for exhibitions devoted exclusively to environment art; for example, the exhibition series *Blockade* and the *Ambiente* exhibition.[64] Accordingly, critics then and now have referred to Palermo's wall paintings as "environments" or have stressed aspects central to this category of work, especially its critical potential. Discussing the wall paintings, Max Brüderlin praised Palermo as a proponent of an "aesthetic effectiveness beyond a subjective viewpoint into a totality of (collective) space," and Laszlo Glozer described one work installed in an abandoned Munich underpass as "an instruction for critical perception."[65] Most important, the utopian nature of the wall paintings was stressed by Joseph Beuys, Palermo's teacher at the Düsseldorf art academy. "He was extremely political," Beuys claimed in 1984, several years after Palermo's death, in terms of "a declaration of a poetic stance."[66] Palermo, he believed, "wanted to create order in an area reaching as far as he could manage . . . in some environment, say, a museum, where he moved something on a wall, for instance, with color. . . . You see a few structures

and levels of order, which he put in some kind of a spatial concept to make something palpable: the way he imagined the order of a world that is created out of art. . . . It was certainly a message. It was definitely a kind of protest."[67]

Certain wall paintings by Palermo bear striking similarities to some of Beuys's installations of the sixties. Palermo's first wall drawings were made with red-brown oil crayon, whose color is reminiscent of Beuys's Braunkreuz and whose material recalls Beuys's use of fat because of its greasy consistency. Beuys probably also mediated Palermo's early collaborations with Henning Christiansen.[68] The concealment of a right angle in one of the rooms in Palermo's *Tuchverspannung* is a strategy found also in the work of Beuys, who filled the corners of a room with fat and felt, respectively, in *Luzerner Fettraum* (*Lucerne Fat Room*), made during the same month as *Tuchverspannung*, in June 1969 (fig. 85), and *Filzecke* (*Felt Corner*) (see fig. 68), made as early as 1963. The replacement of the meeting points of three perpendicularly oriented planes with triangular, diagonally oriented planes disoriented the viewers' relationship to the space by obscuring the corners. As Beuys related, "I frequently destroy the room and negate it. At the moment when I place a human being with all his forces into a room, one has to ask oneself why our rooms are square. It comes from our whole culture. Everything is built on the right angle as a system of coordination."[69]

Be that as it may, Beuys may have appropriated Palermo's work for his own causes by arguing for its political impact; as is well known, Beuys was active in seeking reforms leading to greater political participation at the Düsseldorf art academy and in society at large. Palermo had some political awareness, as his second wife, Kristin, described: "In the dramatic times, years around '68, I cared only about

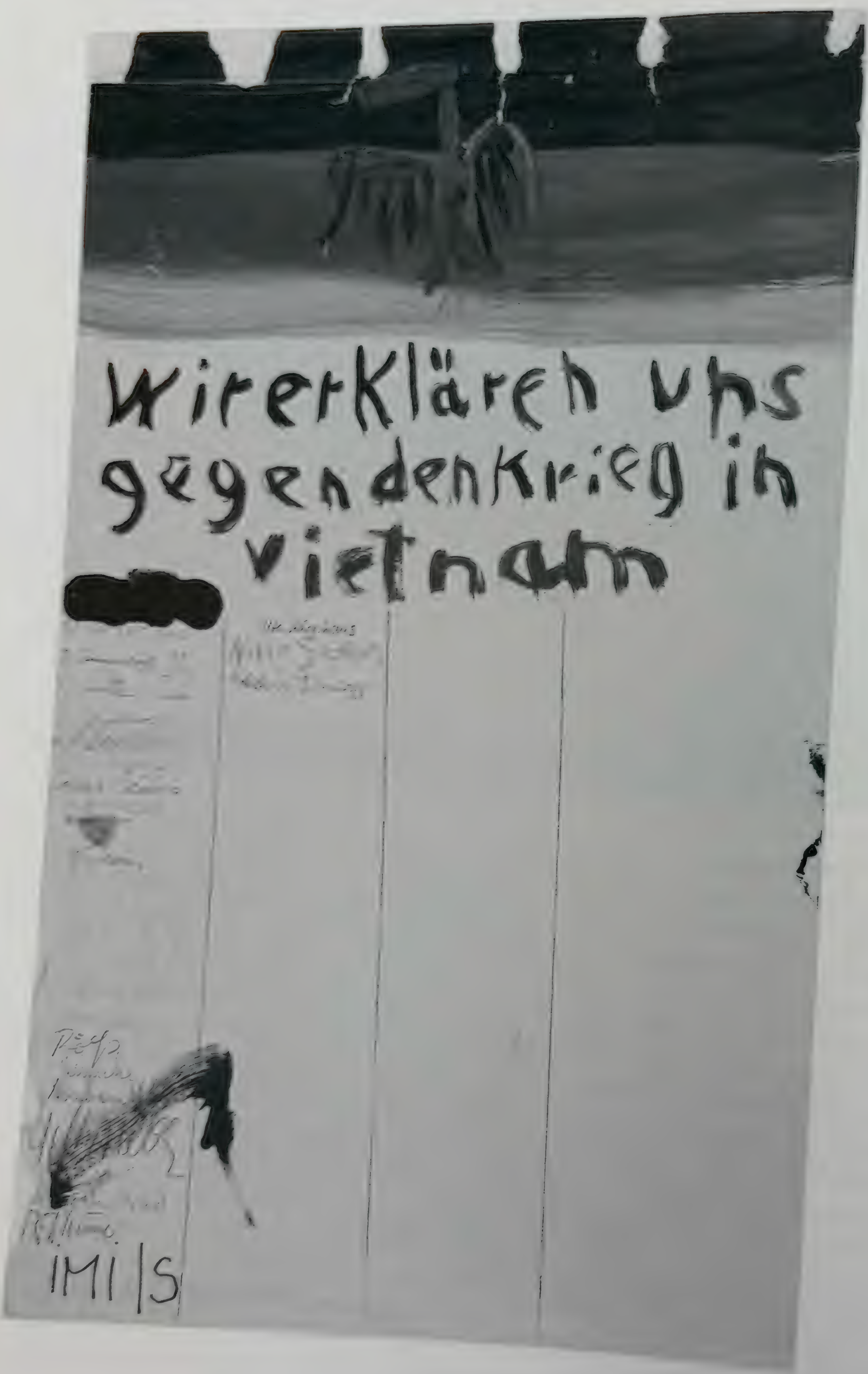

Wir erklären uns
gegen den krieg in
vietnam
IMI|S

Fig. 86 Jörg Immendorff, *Wir erklären uns gegen den Krieg in Vietnam* (We Declare Ourselves Opposed to the War in Vietnam), 1965. Pastel and gouache on paper. 51.7 x 31.3 cm. © 2007 Michael Werner Gallery, New York and Cologne, for Estate of Jörg Immendorff.

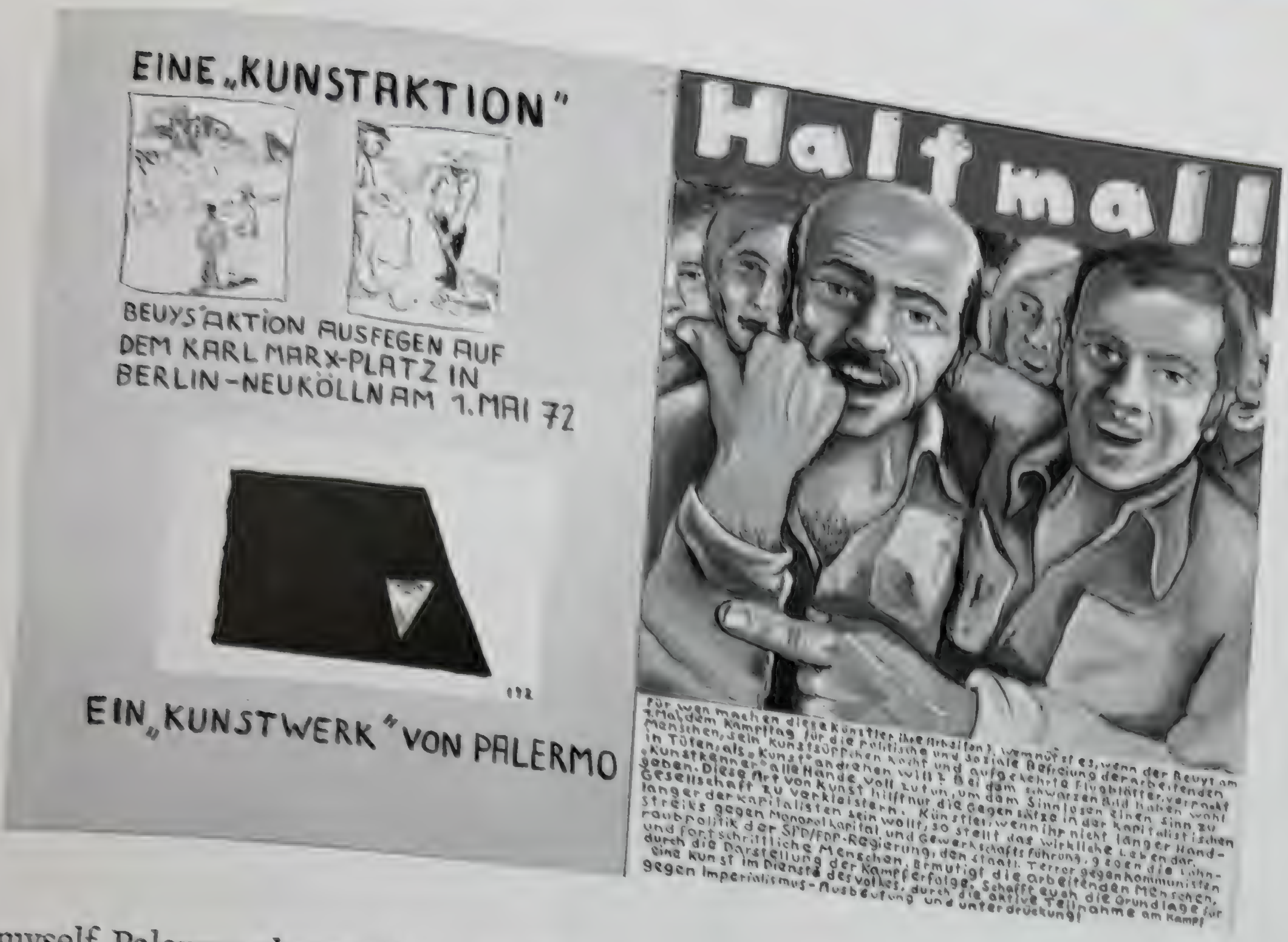

EINE „KUNSTAKTION"
BEUYS'AKTION AUSFEGEN AUF DEM KARL MARX-PLATZ IN BERLIN-NEUKÖLLN AM 1. MAI 72
EIN „KUNSTWERK" VON PALERMO
Halt mal!

Fig. 87 Jörg Immendorff, *Eine "Kunstaktion," Halt Mal!* (An "Art Action," Stop!), from the series *Rechenschaftsberichte* (Accountability Reports), 1973. Acrylic on canvas in two parts, 130 x 200 cm. © 2007 Michael Werner Gallery, New York and Cologne, for Estate of Jörg Immendorff.

myself. Palermo also really only cared about himself and his work. . . . We basically agreed in our political tendencies. That was in the direction of the SPD [Social Democratic Party], which was relatively modern considering the circumstances then. Constraints were to be abolished, one wanted more freedom in life and more social justice. We noticed those things and thought about them. Around that time communes came into being; that was interesting, too, changing one's way of life. Ulrike Meinhof, who wrote for the newspaper *Konkret*—that was very exciting to us."[70] In December 1965, Palermo had signed a declaration against the Vietnam War that was made as a semi-artwork by his then studio mate Immendorff (fig. 86). That probably remained Palermo's most "activist" gesture, and arguing for a political meaning to the wall paintings would be a stretch.

Certainly Immendorff thought so when he created his *Rechenschaftsberichte (Accountability Reports)* in 1973. One depicts Beuys and Palermo under criticism from the working class (fig. 87). Pointing at illustrations of a Beuys Aktion and a fictitious abstract painting by Palermo with his signature triangle, two workers demand polemically: "Stop! For whom do these artists make their work? . . . For the black painting, it requires great effort of art connoisseurs to give meaning to its meaninglessness. This kind of art only helps to veil the oppositions of capitalist society." The charges are clear: Palermo is an abstract painter, remote from social and political realities. Immendorff aside, characterizing the wall paintings as activist would be limiting. Beuys's understanding typified the positive reception of the wall paintings, and we may conclude for now that Palermo's wall paintings, by heightening the viewer's perceptual and spatial awareness, related to conceptions of environment art as utopian. Yet phenomenological and historical approaches by no means exhaust the meanings inherent in Palermo's wall paintings.

PALERMO'S BANALITIES

Along with the positive reception of the wall paintings, hostile criticism erupted in the local newspapers, and Palermo was dismissed frequently as a *Wandmaler*, an expression used derogatively in this context to describe a "mere" wall painter—that is, someone who just paints walls. These contemporary reactions, though limited, should be seen as legitimate, meaningful observations because they too were made by "someone who actually stood inside." The first wall drawing was derided as "impressively boring" (*bestechend langweilig*), the second as noth-

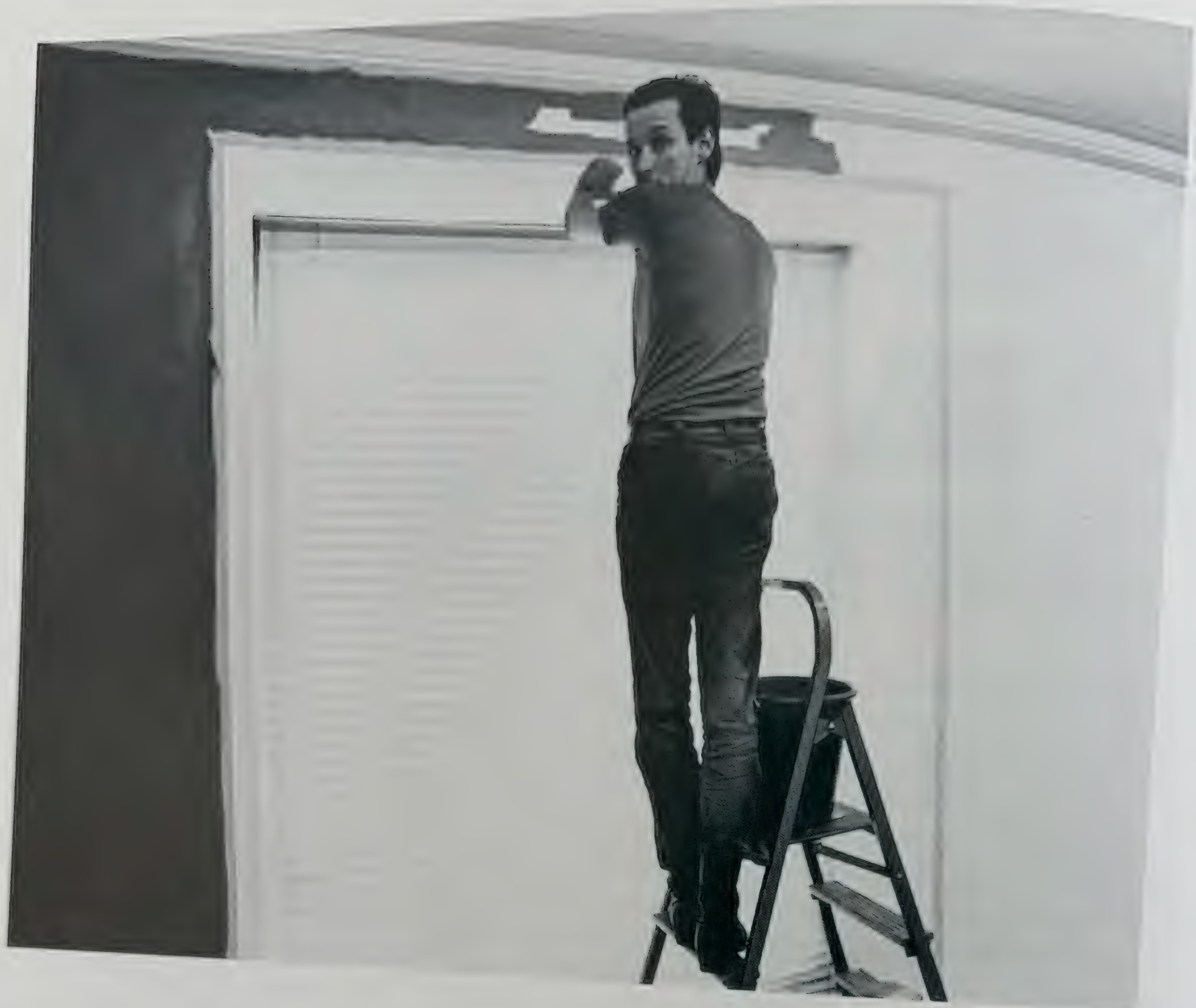


Fig. 88 Palermo painting a wall at Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Cologne, April 1971

ing but "bleak walls" (*kahle Wände*) that "played a trick on its viewers" (*Zuschauer fühlen sich veralbert*). The hostile reactions, it seems, stemmed from the fact that the wall paintings bordered on artlessness, on the commonplace, and in certain aspects even pushed into the realm of banality.[71] Their cheap or nonartistic materials reinforced such impressions: ordinary house paint (*Herbol* facade paint) was used for the positive/negative wall painting, paint chosen from a commercial color chart was used for the gray Bremerhaven wall painting, and regular undercoating was used for the Documenta wall painting.[72] Paints were applied freehand—not gesturally, of course, but to show the trace of the hand, a mode that runs counter to the expectation of uniformity in commercial interior paint jobs and left the impression that Palermo lacked skill (fig. 88). Even lines drawn in oil crayon or oil stick were drawn freehand (on top of a sketch made with a level, ruler, or thread), and their porous nature, visible for example in the photograph of the Galerie Ernst circumscription (see fig. 76), unmistakably conveyed the impression that they were applied.[73] Some of the colors Palermo chose for the wall paintings were trivial—in the sense of something that is self-evident but nevertheless calls attention to itself—for example the blatantly garish orange in the Documenta piece. Other colors were banal—in the sense of something that is so self-evident that it is hardly worth mentioning—for example, the dull gray in the Bremerhaven work.[74]

Palermo was most banal when following "banal schemes," as one critic noted.[75] His habit of tracing edges and filling in spaces must have seemed uninspired and simplistic to the point of childishness. Simple replication was one of the schemes in Palermo's repertoire of banalities. For a wall painting exhibited at the Galerie Konrad Fischer in April 1970, Palermo transferred the dado running along the stairs of his apartment building, primarily meant to make scuff marks less visible, onto the gallery wall at full scale (fig. 89). Palermo stressed the everyday origin of this work. "If one climbs up to the fifth

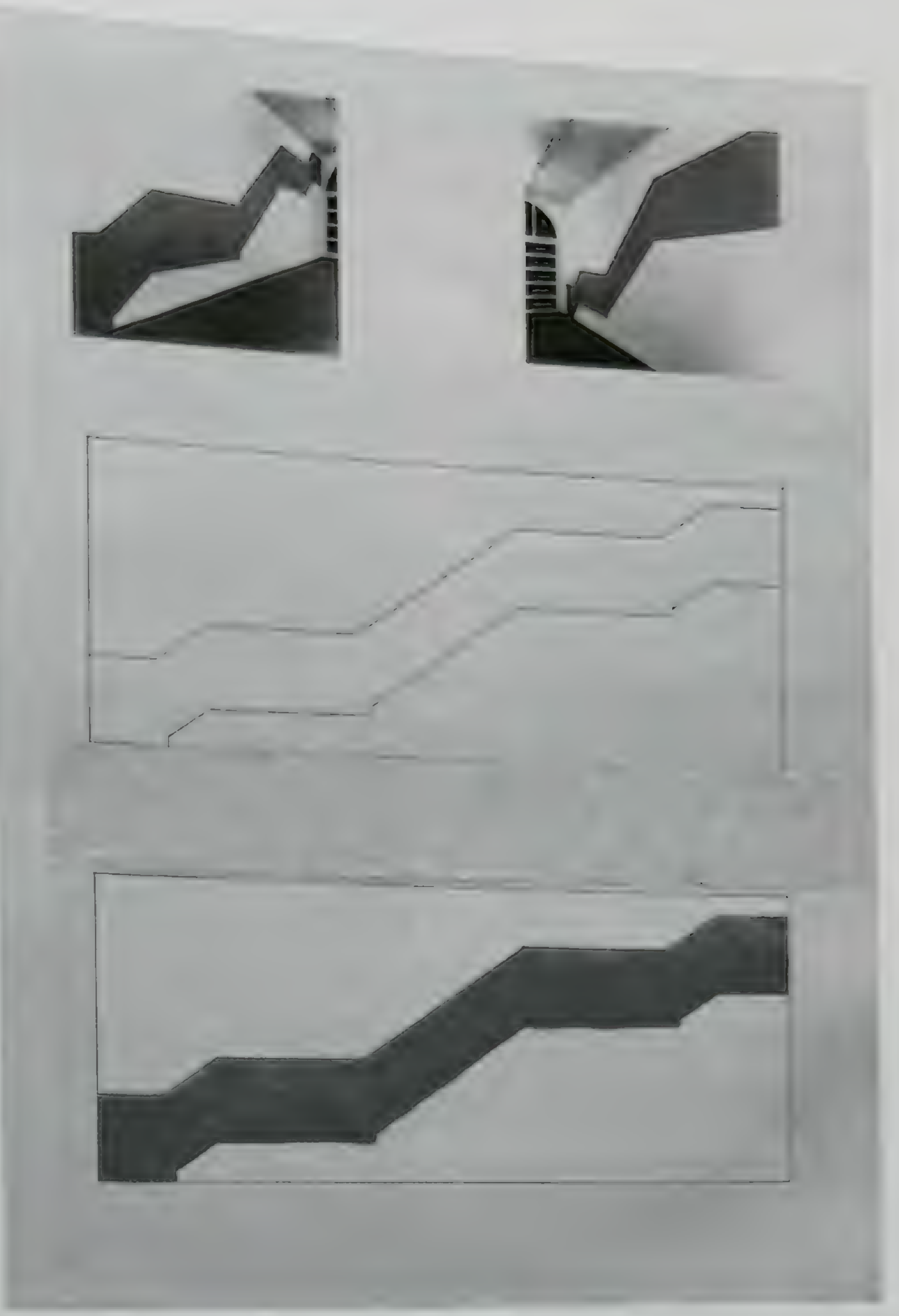
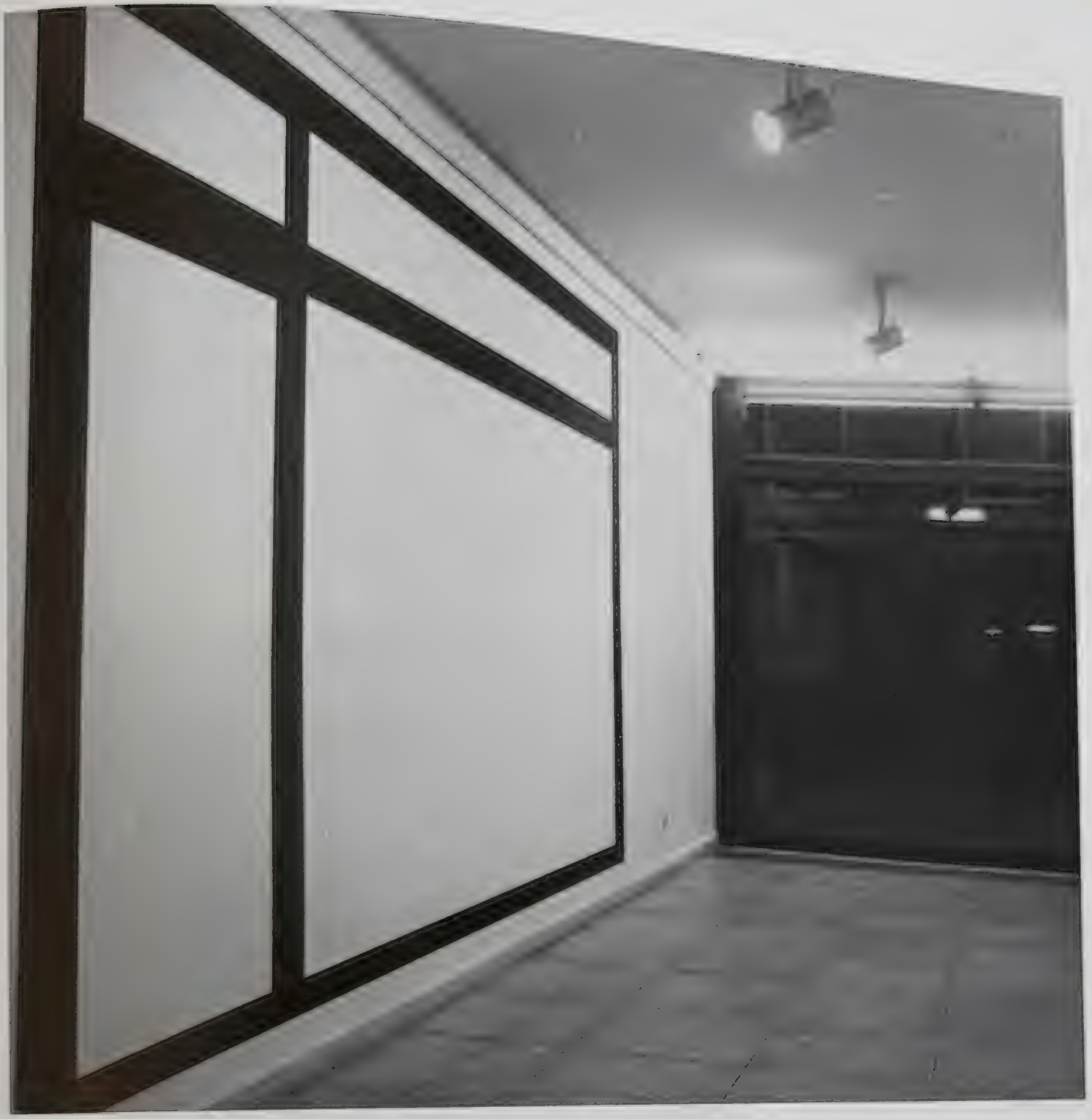


Fig. 89 Documentation for *Treppenhaus* (Staircase) (*Wvz* 555), shown at Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf, 7 April–2 May 1970. Collage on cardboard, c. 90 x 70 cm. Kunstmuseum Bonn.

floor every day like I do, one can beautifully see this perspective."[76] The invitation to the exhibition included a photograph of the staircase, although the shape was readily recognizable and visitors hardly needed the pointer. More commonly, Palermo replicated shapes found in situ, most typically in his wall circumscriptions, starting at the Galerie Ernst and culminating in the positive/negative wall painting. The white and ocher bands in the latter simply copied, as it were, the outlines of the walls and roughly corresponded in width to the door and window frames. The motif of the rectangular frame also picked up on the fluorescent lights, which formed two nested rectangles running parallel to the ceiling's perimeter. For his second wall painting at the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, shown from December 1970 to January 1971, Palermo simply transferred the shape of its dark gray storefront window frame, reduced by 15 percent, onto the adjacent interior wall (fig. 90). One could hardly miss that it was a copy. When he did the same thing with a 20 percent reduction the following month at the Kunstforum, an independent exhibition space located in a pedestrian underpass in downtown Munich, he compared his painting to a "stamp." It was a stamp indeed: the actual painting was a replica of the existing window frame, and the concept was a replica of what he had just done.[77] Palermo's banal windows stood in marked contrast to the age-old high-art conception of painting as a window.[78]

Palermo's interventions were sometimes so banal they were hardly noticeable. "I see nothing," remarked a visitor to one of Palermo's wall drawings that also incorporated windows at de Utrechtse Kring in the Netherlands.[79] The documentation panels, instead of clarifying the artist's interventions (and intentions), sometimes enforce this impression of nothingness, the photographs offering no immediate insight into what Palermo did, for example, in the works exhibited at the *Blockade* exhibition, at the Edinburgh College of Art, and at de Utrechtse Kring. In the proposal for an unexecuted work for the Neusprachliches Gymnasium, a high school, in Mönchengladbach we can barely make out the two white monochrome fields on segments of the balustrade that Palermo indicated directly on the photograph and also in an architectural drawing.[80] He could have chosen close-up views or stressed his interventions more strongly in the drawings. He did not. The "barely there" aspect was important to him. As Palermo observed in describing the window-frame replication in Munich: "One looks through the form (the window frame) onto the form. The question is whether people notice it: mostly they don't even see the large form when they stand in front of it."[81]

Palermo liked commonplace spaces like the underpass in downtown Munich. It is notable that two of the galleries that became sites for his wall paintings, Galerie Ernst in Hanover and Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich, were located in former apartment buildings, and their architecture—their scale, layout, and features such as radiators, doors, and windows—often betrayed their original residential function.[82] And several of his wall paintings were made for semi-private spaces—the artist's studio, the outside of a house, a conference room—or for exclusively private apartments. The banality of Palermo's wall paintings was particularly prominent in the context of the home, when juxtaposed with furniture or with other paintings, which Palermo made no effort to remove. The documentation of his 1971 wall drawing in the apartment of Franz Dahlem in Darmstadt—a blue line wall circumscription—shows a cabinet and a hanging lamp in the background, which the artist could easily have moved or avoided for the photograph (fig. 91).[83] An installation made during the same year with Gerhard Richter for the apartment of Six Friedrich (see fig. 152) made the point even more clearly. Here Palermo partially framed a window with a gray right angle of about a hand's breadth. The shape reproduced half the outline of the window, running parallel to its right and bottom edges, and it filled in some of the plain area adjacent to the window, which was more spacious on the right than on the left side, thus rectify-



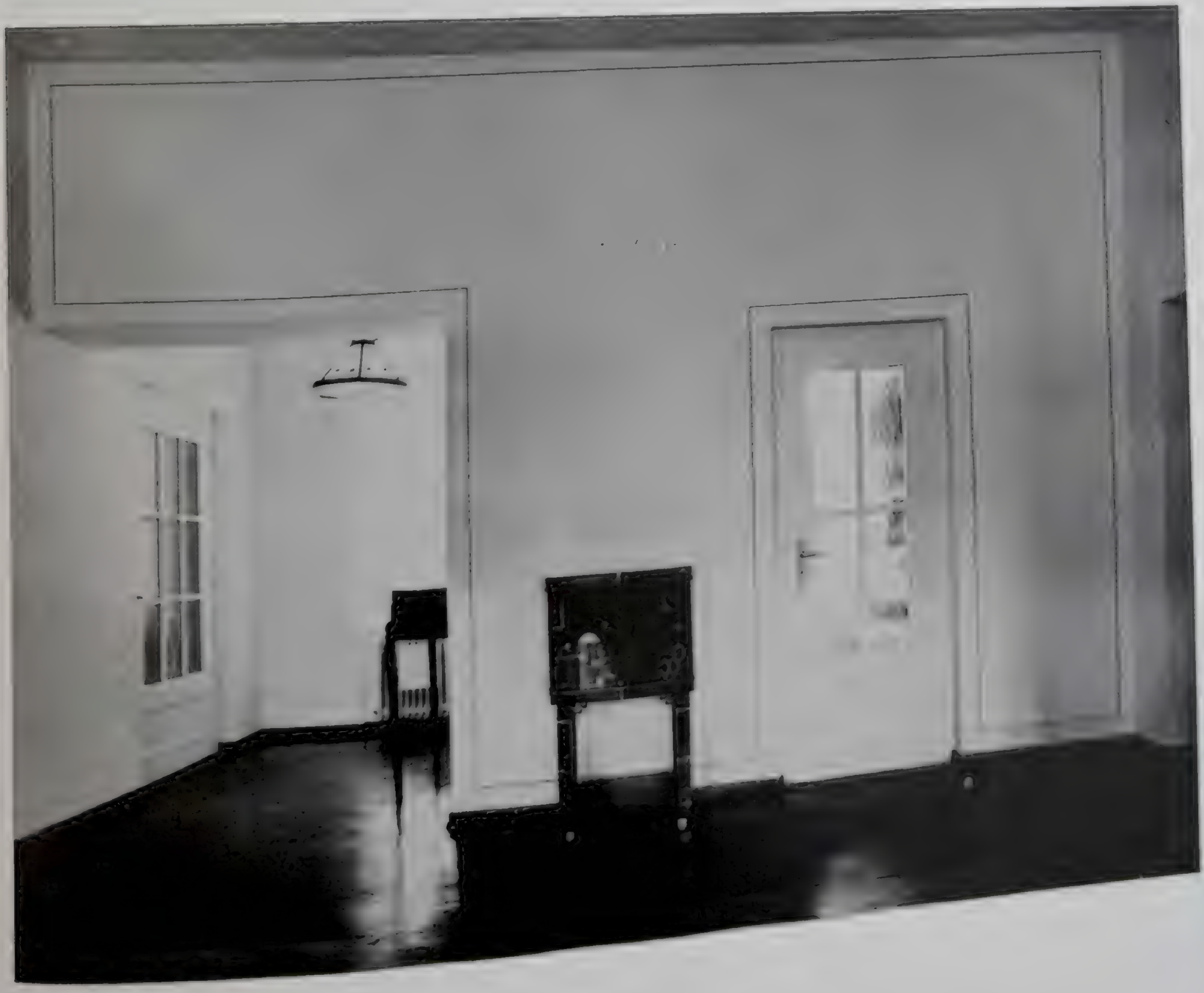


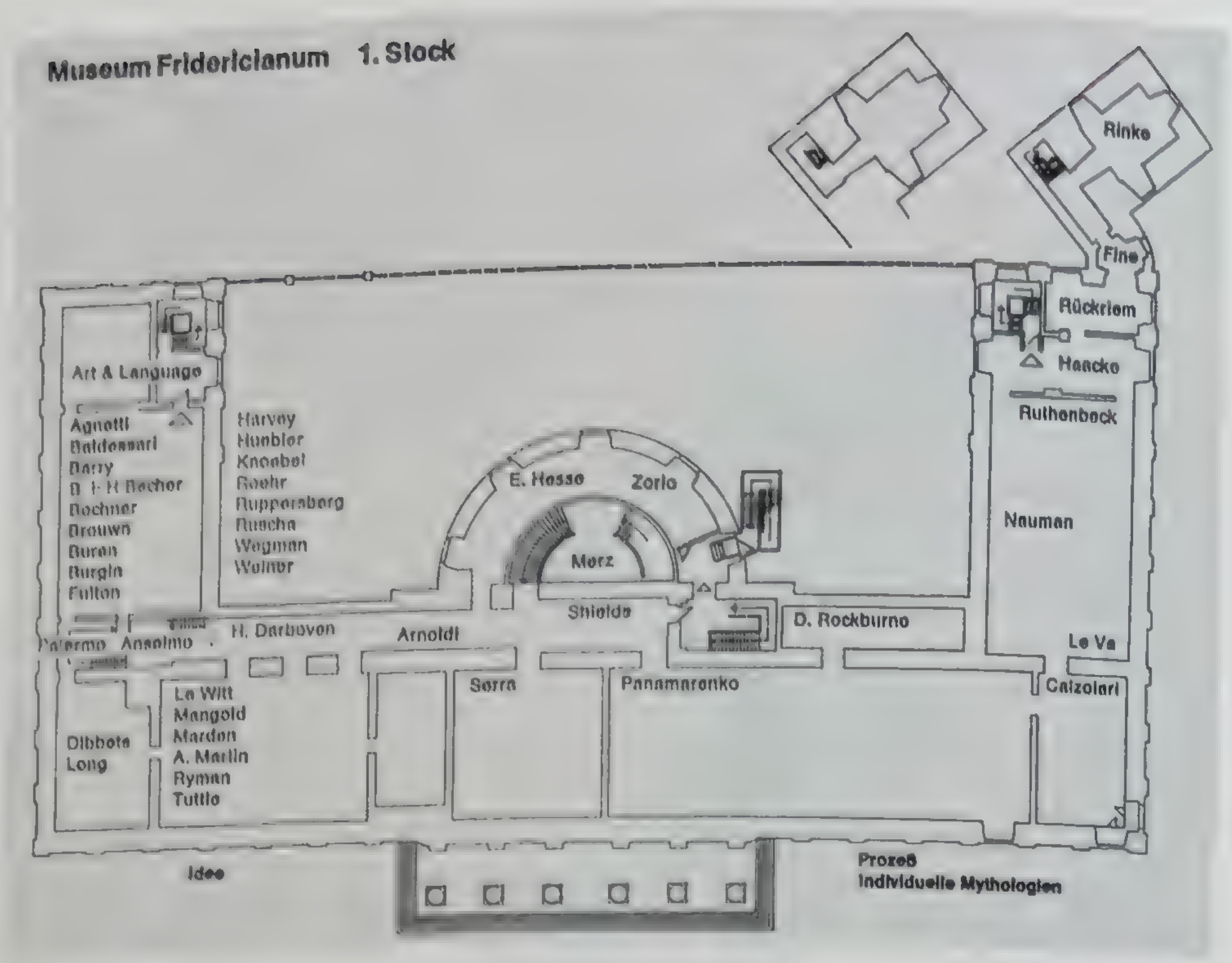
Fig. 90 *Fenster I* (Window I), Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven, 19 December 1970–13 January 1971. Unknown paint on wall, room: 450 (max.) x 814 (max.) cm

Fig. 91 Untitled wall drawing, apartment of Franz Dahlem, Darmstadt, 1971. Blue oil crayon on wall, dimensions unknown

ing the off-center location of the window.[84] Two paintings by Richter were hung to the left of the window: *Vorhang* (Curtain, 1964) on top and *Klorolle* (Toilet-Paper Roll, 1965; see fig. 153) below, both painted in his signature blurred, photo-realist style. It might have seemed challenging to match the banality of Richter's subject matter, a toilet-paper roll and a curtain placed next to an actual window. But the gray angle succeeded by blending in with the interior. Palermo's contribution, unlike Richter's, was not even a painting. It was merely paint on the wall. We shall see that Palermo was neither sloppy nor inconsistent in his combination of banality with a heightened sensitivity to space and perception, and to historical and contemporary debates about the relation of art to politics. Banality was Palermo's ingenuity.[85]

BANALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

What was the purpose and context of Palermo's banalities? On the most basic level, his banal additions to commercial galleries and art museums would have reminded visitors that these seemingly privileged spaces were simply rooms. Especially for group exhibitions, Palermo sought out ordinary places, in three instances choosing staircases—at Documenta, in Edinburgh, and in Frankfurt—over standard display areas. If the wall paintings cannot be considered conceptual art, as argued in the opening of this chapter, could they be classified as the kind of "institutional critique" practiced by European and American artists during the late 1960s and the 1970s? Palermo was frequently exhibited alongside these artists. The staircase at Documenta 5, for example, led visitors into a room with installations by Daniel Buren, Stanley Brouwn, Mel Bochner, and others, and was part of a section entitled *Idee + Idee/Licht* (Idea + Idea/Light) curated by Konrad Fischer and Klaus Honnef (fig. 92).[86] Several photographs dating from 1969, the first full year that Palermo dedicated to wall painting, show the artist visiting Marcel Broodthaers's garden, its wall inscribed *Département des Aigles* (Department of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Art & Language
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Buren
Burgin
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Harvey
Huebler
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Ruppersberg
Ruscha
Wegman
Weiner
E. Hesse
Zorio
Merz
Nauman
Shields
D. Rockburne
Palermo
Anselmo
H. Darboven
Arnoldi
Le Va
Serra
Panamarenko
Calzolari
LeWitt
Mangold
Marden
A. Martin
Ryman
Tuttle
Dibbets
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Idee
Prozeß
Individuelle Mythologien

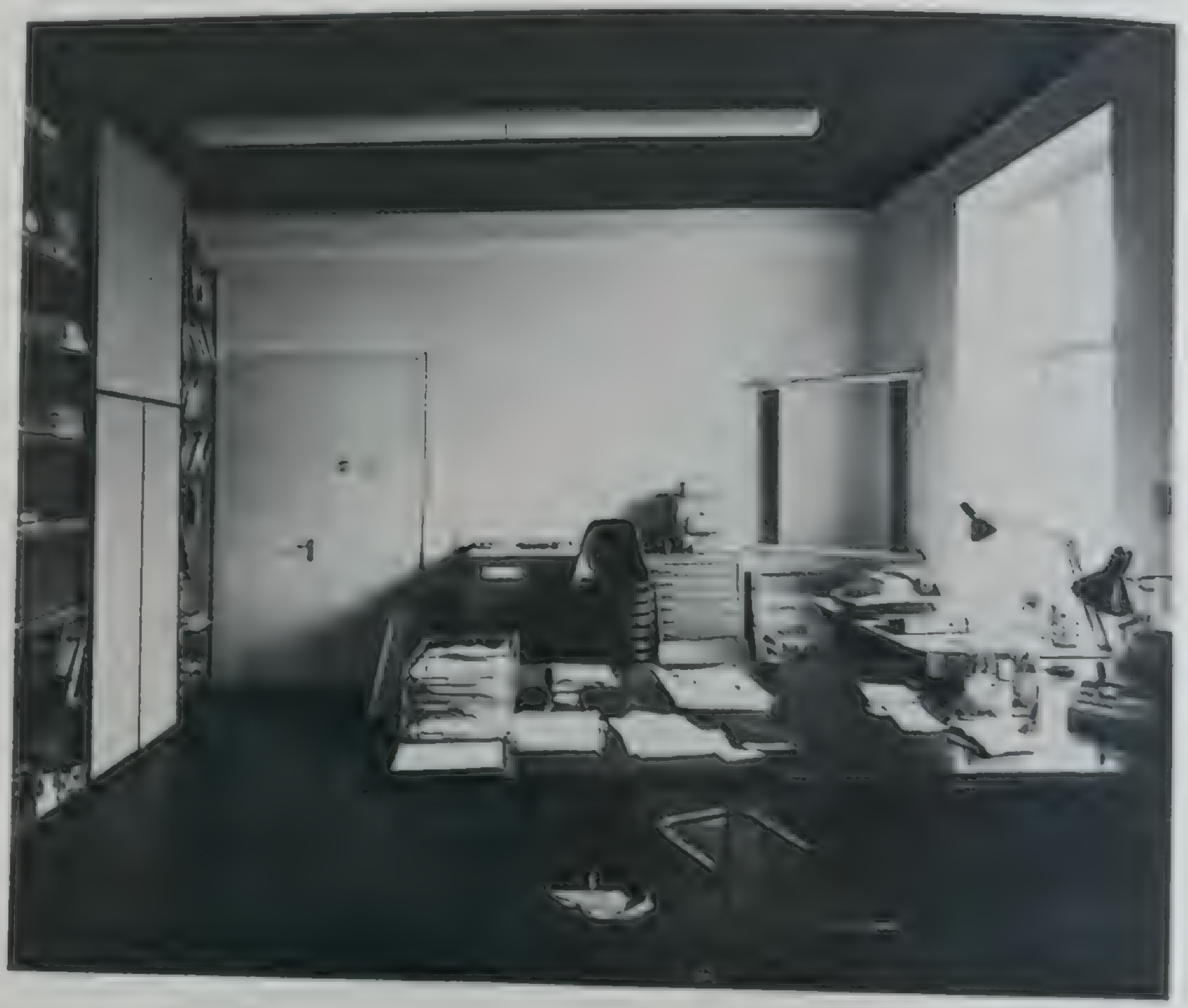


Fig. 92 Second-floor layout for Documenta 5 exhibition, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, 30 June–8 October 1972, as shown in *Documenta 5: Befragung der Realität, Bildwelten heute*, exh. cat. (Kassel: Neue Galerie and Museum Fridericianum, 1972), 42

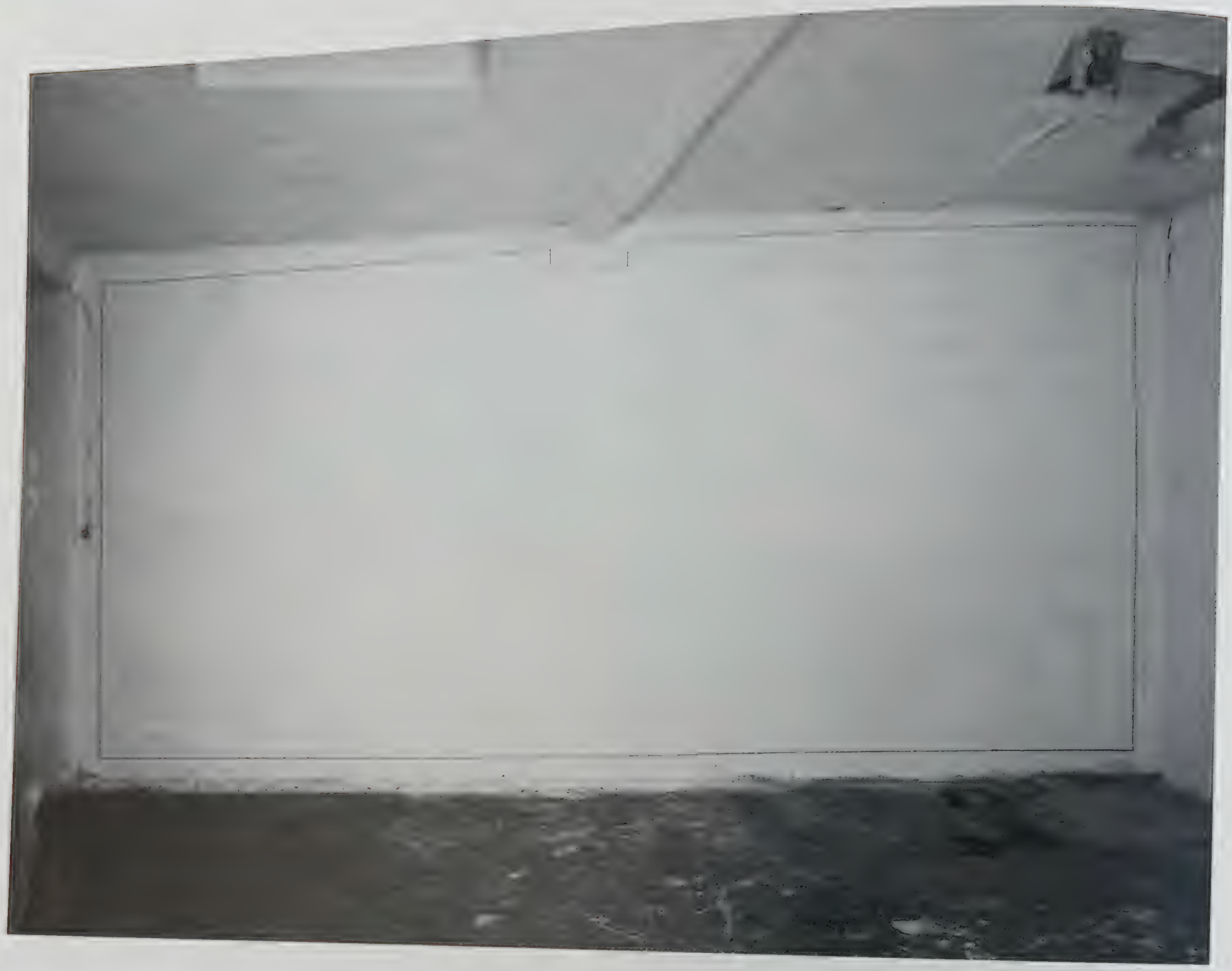
Fig. 93 Michael Asher, East view of general office space, Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Cologne, 4–28 September 1973. © 2007 Michael Asher.

Eagles), referring to the legendary installation Broodthaers had started to critically examine the nature of museum exhibitions and collections.[87]

Institutional critique may be defined as the particular branch of conceptual art that investigates the impact of the institutional framework on definitions of art. Artists associated with this type of work uncover the surreptitious powers and practices of museums, galleries, collectors, and art fairs that shape not only the production and distribution of works of art but also our knowledge, experience, and judgment of them.[88] Take Michael Asher's 1973 wall painting for the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Cologne (fig. 93). Having painted the ceilings of the entire gallery space in a dark gray that matched the floor, the artist described the effect of his intervention as follows: "Each and every part of the gallery was linked by the newly painted ceiling, establishing an actual visual continuity and therefore integrating the exhibition areas with those areas normally not on view. By visually unifying the various areas, their functional interdependence was revealed to the viewer who, in order to perceive the work in its totality, had to have access to all of the gallery areas. The normal procedures and functions of the gallery became integrated into the exhibit as the work focused upon them as the content of the exhibition."[89] The commercial and curatorial functions of the contemporary art gallery were exposed as continuous. The gallery as a site of business interaction, represented by the offices, was no longer separate from the gallery as a site for showing works of art, represented by the two exhibition areas.

Asher's ceiling painting is strikingly similar to Palermo's monochrome wall paintings, perhaps not a coincidence given that they had become friends the previous year.[90] Indeed, Asher and Palermo seemed to enter into a dialogue about walls at this point, especially with the wall painting Palermo made in the same year for the Kunstverein in Hamburg (see fig. 106). Several critics have made room for Palermo in the realm of institutional critique. Do the wall paintings, as some claim, operate as an active resistance to the proliferating German art market? Do they subvert the idea of a circulation of art commodities? In what sense can Palermo's wall paintings be said to analyze the conditions of art exhibition spaces?

Reviewing a 1971 exhibition of Palermo's prints based on his first wall drawing at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich, the critic Reent Schwarz objected to the marketability of the new medium, which the original site-specific work had supposedly evaded. "In 1968," he wrote, Palermo "drew lines with brown oil crayon on all large white wall areas. Where pictures used to hang, now simple drawn squares were to be seen. Of course neither the idea nor the wall could be sold. Now Palermo executed it once again as a silkscreen for sale and printed the same brown lines on white paper. But as such, in conforming to the necessities of the art market, the brown lines, which were once conceived as a gesture of negation and resistance, have been deprived of their former meaning."[91] Discussing *Wandmalerei und Skulptur*, a collaboration by Richter and Palermo, Glozer also emphasized the idea that it reflected on the conditions of art presentation and promotion. This was a "situation-specific installation," specific to the space of a commercial art gallery. "A unique and consistently conceived exhibition work has replaced the supply with accumulated production (Richter's paintings, Palermo's cloth pictures and drawings could definitely fill exhibition spaces). In other words: business card has replaced commodity."[92] Palermo's last wall painting at the Kunstverein Hamburg was received similarly. On the occasion of its temporary reconstruction in 1992, Christoph Blase described the piece as engendering a walk "through an architecture which was made for nothing but to exhibit art in it."[93] A review of the original exhibition in 1973 noted, "A sensational exhibition of the Kunstverein: it exhibits its own walls."[94] The controversy surrounding the original exhibition in the popular press demonstrated the implications of Palermo's exhibition of an exhibition space. By questioning whether his wall painting was in fact art or simply a



Wandstreich (a *Streich* is a silly trick that fools its audience), one could argue, this heated debate underlined the work's nature as institutional critique. It generated widespread discussion about the definition of art, in particular the role of skill and effort in producing art, and about the significance of the value and quality of materials used.[95]

These lines of argument apply to almost any wall painting by Palermo, or, for that matter, to any wall work by any other artist. Yet such generalities are precisely what successful institutional critique, as an analysis of the materialist conditions of art, must defy and move beyond. A compelling case can be made for viewing two Palermo works as institutional critiques, however. Between 1970 and 1971, Palermo made the only wall work he ever did for his own studio, drawing a graphite line parallel to the outlines of one of the walls in his Mönchengladbach studio, one inside and one outside (fig. 94).[96] Never visible at the same time, the two lines nevertheless always referred to each other. They thus established a mental continuity between inside and outside, between the artist's semi-private space and a public space outside it. Yet viewers, and above all Palermo himself, always experienced the lines as separate, a fact that created a dramatic rupture between conceptual knowledge and actual experience, demonstrating a classic philosophical problem. Moreover, much like Daniel Buren's call for making art outside the studio, Palermo's wall drawing can thus be read as visualizing the desire or need to unite artistic activity with public life. Unlike Buren, however, Palermo renders this desire as perpetually unfulfilled.[97] Even more convincing in its play with the founding constituents of art is the blue triangle multiple edition, which Palermo himself probably considered part of his wall paintings.[98]

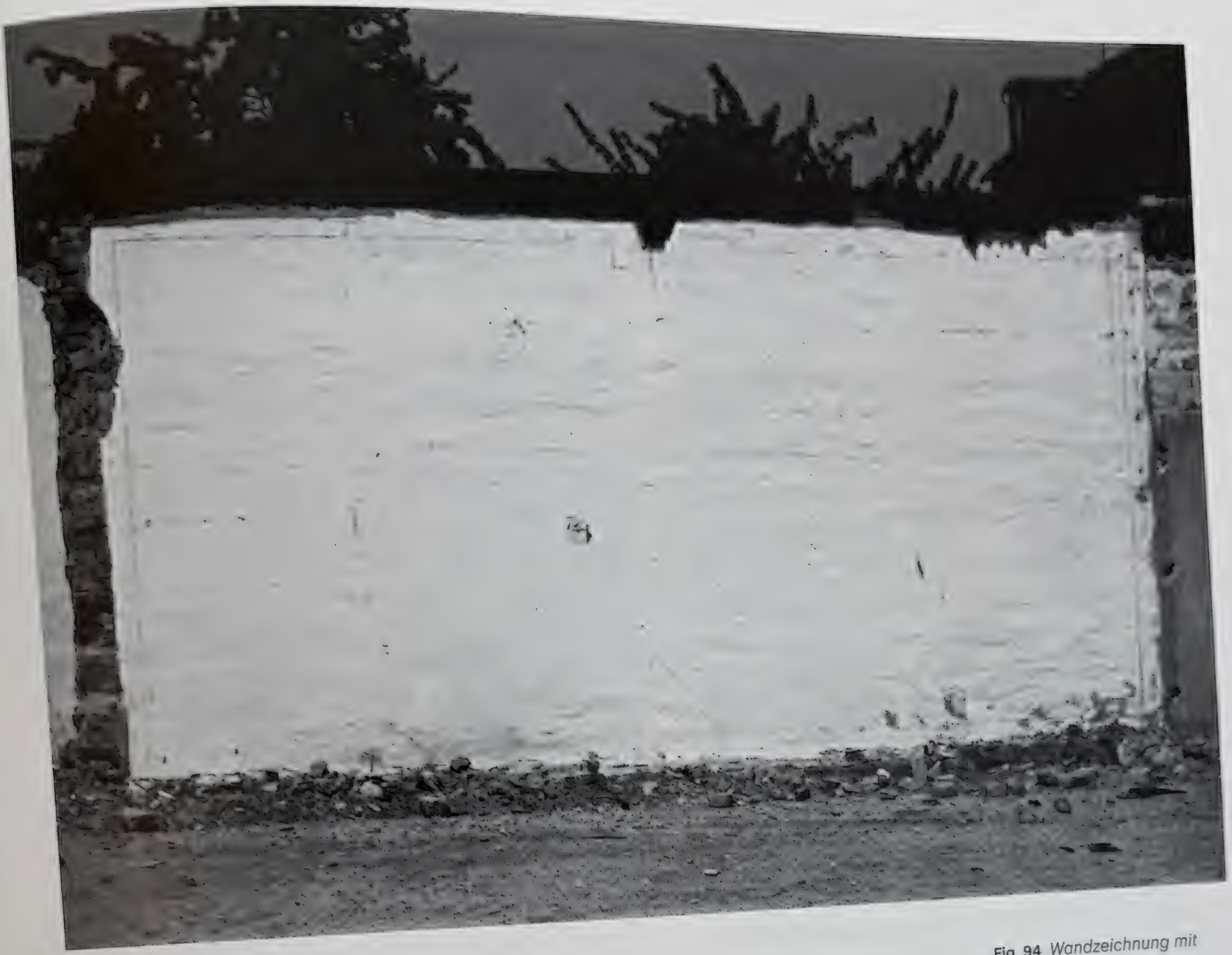


Fig. 94 *Wandzeichnung mit Graphit* (Wall Drawing with Graphite), interior and exterior of Palermo's studio in Mönchengladbach, 1970–71. Graphite on walls.

Yet the blue triangle wall paintings from the kit edition and the Mönchengladbach studio drawing clearly represent exceptions. While we may find elements of institutional critique in Palermo's other wall paintings, none of them visually or conceptually articulates a critical attitude toward the institutions of art beyond the simple, general fact that they are applied to gallery or museum walls. One should also note that while Palermo exhibited most of his wall paintings in galleries and museums, a number of them were made or proposed for other settings, both private and public, indoors and outdoors. Three proposals for school buildings, for example, remained unexecuted: one for a night school in Cologne around 1973, one for a high school in Mönchengladbach mentioned earlier, and one for the university library in Freiburg.[99]

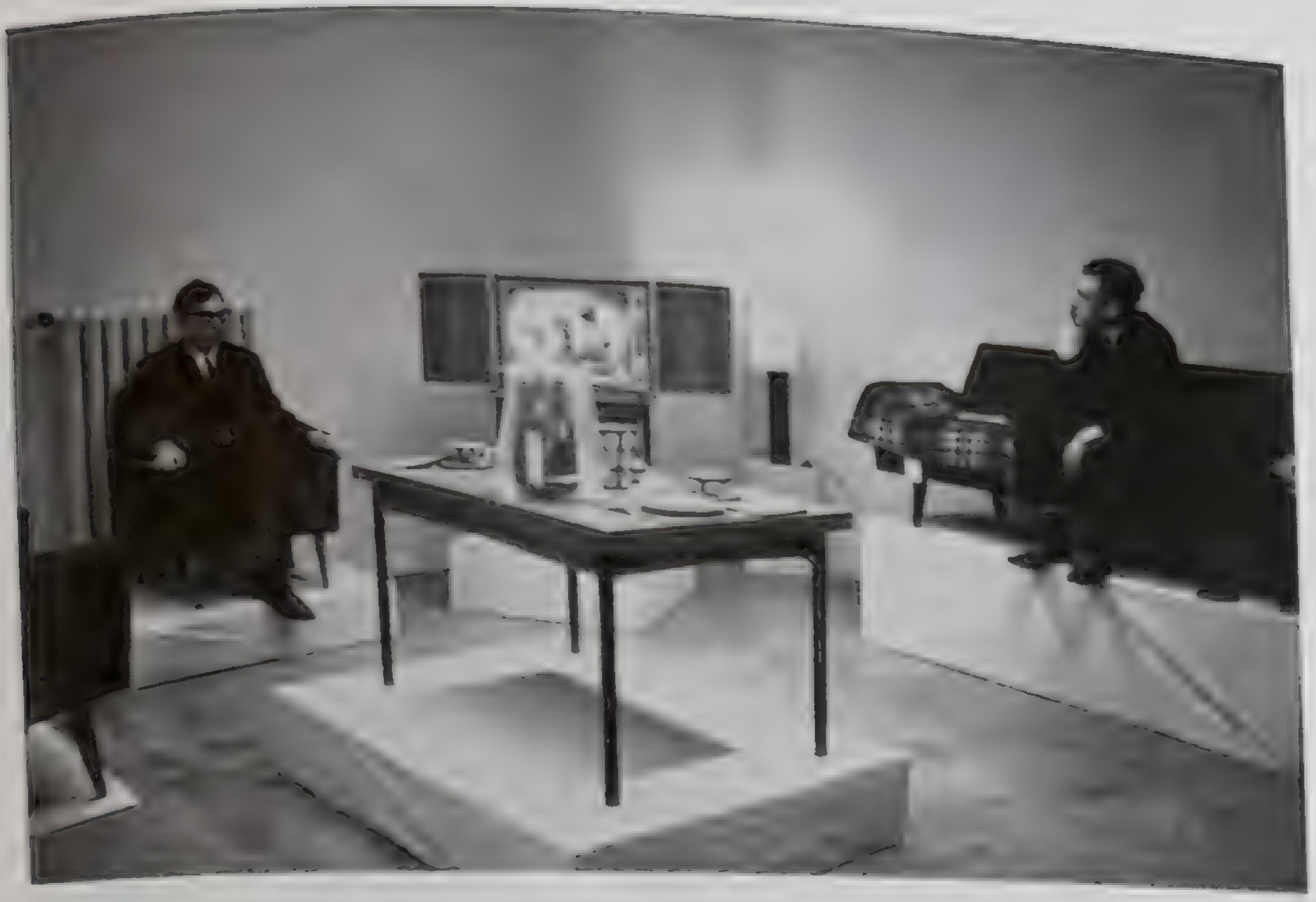
GERMAN POP INTERIORS

Palermo's particular brand of banality brings to mind other canonical, primarily American postwar art, such as Ellsworth Kelly's noncompositional paintings in France and Jasper Johns's *Flag*. There is, however, a more historically and geographically immediate context that is more specifically relevant in its focus on interiors and decoration. Richter, Polke, and Konrad Lueg (the name under which Konrad Fischer, Palermo's dealer and friend, produced art) formed the core of a loose group whose art came to be known as capitalist realism. When Palermo began painting walls five years after their first group exhibition in an abandoned shop in Düsseldorf, he was in part responding to the legacy of his older friends, who had placed the banality of home decor and living environments at the core of their pop art from its inception. As with Palermo, banality in their hands, in Richter's words "means a little bit more than *unimportant*."[100]

On the evening of 11 October 1963, Richter and Lueg organized *Leben mit Pop. eine Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus* (Living with Pop: A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism) in the Düsseldorf furniture store Möbelhaus Berges (fig. 95).[101] The performance consisted of three parts. Visitors were greeted by life-size sculptures of the dealer Alfred Schmela and President Kennedy, gathered in a waiting room decorated with antlers, then were called in groups to enter an "average living room," where the two artists lounged on furniture placed on pedestals.[102] A television was running next to a table set for a meal, flowers and the magazine *Schöner Wohnen* were placed on a tea cart, and the odor of a pine-scented air freshener filled the room. Accompanied by dance music that was periodically interrupted by ads for furniture, the duo took visitors on tours through, in their own words, "the entire department store on display without alterations." Eight of their paintings were added to a "comprehensive furniture exhibition of all current styles on four floors."[103]

Three years later, Lueg followed up *Leben mit Pop* with the little-known exhibition event *Kaffee und Kuchen* (Coffee and Cake) at Galerie Schmela (fig. 96). The gallery was turned into a dining room that displayed on flower-patterned wallpaper a selection of Lueg's paintings of decorative patterns taken from washcloths, wallpaper, and the like, as well as Richter's portrait of Alfred Schmela. Invited friends came for coffee and cake, and were seated at a long table set with pretty china, napkins, and tableware. Richter, meanwhile, continued to feature curtains and toilet rolls, chairs and chandeliers, pillows and pianos in his blur paintings, although his iconography of banality was never limited to the home and included mass media imagery ranging from German Shepherds and fashion models to pyramids and portraits.

The "average living room" also became a central theme for Polke, who began to incorporate into his paintings actual fragments of decorative fabric.[104] K. H. Hödicke had used patterned fabric as a background for his 1962 painting *Christa* (see fig. 67), but it was Polke who first made this type of material a main feature of a painting, in his 1964 *Das Palmen Bild* (see fig. 66). He used fabric increasingly during 1965 in paintings like *Bohnen* (Beans) and continued to do so throughout the 1960s. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh,



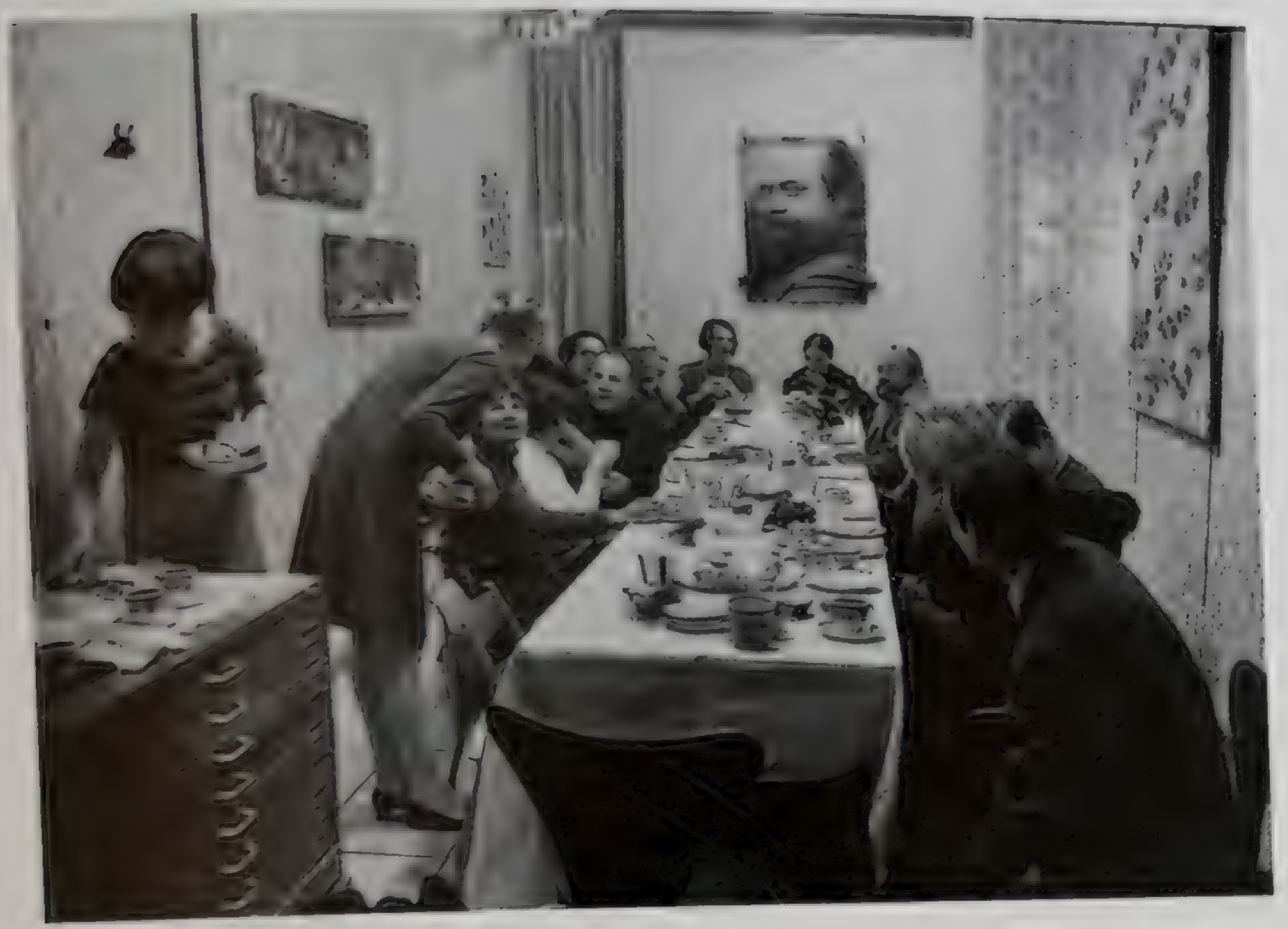


Fig. 95 Konrad Lueg and Gerhard Richter, *Leben mit Pop. eine Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus* (Living with Pop: A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism), performance at Möbelhaus Berges, Düsseldorf, 11 October 1963. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

Fig. 96 Konrad Lueg, *Kaffee und Kuchen* (Coffee and Cake), happening, part of exhibition series *Hommage an Schmela* at Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf, 11 December 1966

in his 1976 essay on Polke, describes the cloth as "eloquent decorative fabrics of cheap origin, *Kleinkariertes* [an untranslatable term meaning both small checked patterns and narrow-mindedness] from the domestic sphere or carnival silks with colors and ornaments far beyond good and bad taste, moon and stars, skulls and pirate bones, chinoiseries made of artificial silk."[105] Nevertheless, Lueg's adapted patterns paradoxically appear less transformed and more banal (as opposed to trivial) than Polke's found fabrics. While Polke's painting tends to work against the found grounds in his signature bad-taste style, Lueg's patterns remain the exclusive motif, and any additions to the patterns blend right in. Lueg further included subtle allusions to the origin of his motifs such as borders, misprints, and trompe l'oeil effects of folded or superimposed paper.[106]

Like the fabric and colors of Palermo's cloth pictures, the banality so central to German pop and to Palermo's wall paintings must be seen in the context of the economic miracle. In an era of increasing availability of goods and rising standards of living, there had been much argument among artists and critics about German pop. Was it ironic or indifferent, funny or resigned? Did these artists criticize the self-satisfied consumerism of the economic miracle, the petit-bourgeois lifestyle with its so-called *volkstümlich* (popular-traditionalist) taste, or did they embrace its iconography and materials precisely to renounce the critical potential of art? "Lueg's homage to washcloth and towel is a celebration of modern life. One will search in vain for a biting social critique," the dealer Hans Strelow warned in his essay for Lueg's 1966 exhibition at Galerie René Block; "Let's learn to enjoy our environment."[107] The dealer Block himself, on the other hand, argued that, inspired by "more banal and more narrow-minded patterns than American pop art, these artists rendered ironic the behavior of the German petite bourgeoisie [*des deutschen Spiessertums*], which came through the war unbroken," and the writer Heinz Ohff insisted that the capitalist realists "took the banal and surmounted it." In a world full of banalities, he continued, these artists "took back what commerce had taken from them: the image."[108] Later scholars have tended to stress the critical aspects. Buchloh, a contemporary of Polke's but writing on his 1960s work from the perspective of the mid-seventies, firmly situated the artist's use of fabrics in the context of the "homely hangings and fashionable costumes of the subcultural proletariat of the 1950s in the West German Republic." Polke's early work, in Buchloh's estimation, was an ironic negation of the bourgeois demand for a subjective art, while Richter's was a working through of the possibilities of realist painting and a resistance to the culture industry.[109]

Palermo and the capitalist realists focused on banality as it was located in the everyday lived environment and as they witnessed it during the years of the economic miracle. Yet Palermo's wall paintings lacked the ambivalent attitude toward banality that was at the core of German pop art. His banality resided in the forms, in the making, and in the materials and was therefore less overt, more genuine and generic, and was never class or group specific. Palermo's wall paintings repositioned the capitalist realist theme of the banal interior by placing it in juxtaposition to contemporary environments and by stressing its decorative aspects.

DECORATION

The phenomenological concerns of the wall paintings, within the utopian framework of European environments, and their banal qualities, related to German pop, are tendencies that coexist in each of Palermo's wall paintings. As the viewer grew accustomed to the destabilizing effects of a work, the banality of Palermo's methods would gradually surface. At Galerie Block one would begin to see the wall showing through the brittle chalk lines; at the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst and Documenta, the poor paint quality would become noticeable. In turn, even the most banal of Palermo's wall works, his transfers, were arranged so as to disturb the viewer's visual understanding. At the Galerie Fischer exhibition, the transferred dado appeared to float and, from certain points of view, became perspectivally distorted. The juxtaposition of actual and painted window frames in Bremerhaven and Munich implied a shadowlike projection that was untrue to the lighting conditions and the perpendicular relationship of wall to window. The opacity of a window painted on the wall was no less puzzling.

Palermo employed decoration to accommodate these otherwise mutually exclusive poles of the phenomenological and the banal, heightened sensitivity and shallow simplicity. The curator Klaus Honnef experienced all Palermo's wall paintings as "somewhat decorative" and even reported that "Palermo has absolutely no objection to his work being regarded as a type of interior decoration."[110] Palermo was noted for his taciturnity, and many words have been put into his mouth, yet Honnef's account seems plausible in view of the visual evidence for the artist's decorative interests and given his initial successful design studies at the Werkkunstschule in Münster.[111] Palermo's interventions functioned as ornaments: they adapted to the architecture or emphasized existing spatial features but were always in excess of these. They evoked standard decorative vocabulary (repetition, pattern, plane, line, symmetry) and common decorative practices within architecture (dados, moldings, blind windows), some of which were noted at the time.[112] The decorative additions could either deeply affect and destabilize the viewer or appear banal, almost unworthy of notice. Palermo's best wall paintings did both.

If we take the former effect to be the traditional purview of art and the latter that of nonart, we can see that decoration in Palermo's wall paintings operates in the way described by Jacques Derrida in his deconstruction of Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of Judgment). Derrida's Parergon essay—a chapter of his 1978 *La Vérité en peinture* (The Truth in Painting)—examines the German Enlightenment thinker's distinction between two types of ornament, *Zierathen* (ornament) and *Parerga* (parergon), on the one hand, and *Schmuck* (adornment) and *Parure* on the other. Following Kant, the parergon, although not an intrinsic part of the beautiful object, formally enhances its beautiful qualities and thus provides disinterested pleasure; Schmuck, by contrast, takes away from them and provides mere enjoyment.[113] Derrida reveals and insists on the uncertainty of these distinctions. "A parergon comes against, beside, and in addition to the ergon, the work done, the fact, the work," he writes, "but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board. It is first of all the on (the) bo(a)rd(er)."[114] Derrida specifically deconstructs the three examples Kant gives of Parerga—garments on statues, columns in architecture, and frames for paintings, noting, "[The] frame is problematical. I do not know what is essential and what is accessory, neither proper nor improper, and that Kant calls parergon, for example the frame. Where does the frame take place. Does it take place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its internal limit. Its external limit. And its surface between the two limits."[115]

Not surprisingly, the frame features prominently in the circumscriptions, the motif that occupied Palermo the most while working on walls. The frame collapses the strong impact and the barely there, the phenomenological and the banal. But decorative aspects of all kinds operate in the wall paintings, most obviously in the positive/negative painting. The critic Günter Pfeiffer called the work "spatial design," elaborating that Palermo "practices a mimicry of classicism, which sometimes leads us to speculate that he has joined the coffered ceiling painters of the eighteenth century."[116] The linear painted frames were reminiscent of molding, and basic decorative strategies such as reversed symmetry and the balancing of line and plane were used. Palermo exaggerated this decorative feel in a second version, a collaboration with Richter, in which he painted all four walls ocher framed by a white stripe.

Many other wall paintings carried decorative connotations. A reviewer of the two wall paintings at the Galerie Ernst exhibition wondered whether Palermo was "going for ingenious decoration in impressive rooms." The stretched cloth and linear wall circumscription did, in fact, recall historical decorative schemes, such as the ornamental coverings or highlighting of corners and edges in baroque and rococo interiors or the use of textiles to decorate walls.[117] The decorative effect was enhanced by the fabric's placement parallel to the track lighting and the line's placement parallel to the outlines of the walls. We also know that for the latter, Palermo snapped a chalk line to create straight lines, thus making use of a traditional technique common among architects and interior designers.[118] Palermo also liked decorative dados, not only transferred (as in the Fischer exhibition) but also in situ. In the staircase of the Frankfurter Kunstverein he simply painted and filled in the wall segment beneath the banister, as visible today in its reconstruction. We may recall in this context Palermo's blue triangle edition and other triangles, placed above doors and reminiscent of pediments. Palermo's wall painting for the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, with its continuous line of blue triangles around the room, appears particularly decorative because it echoes the traditional location of stucco decoration. Sometimes, Palermo intervened directly in a preexisting decorative feature like stucco. At the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden for an exhibition series entitled *14 × 14* (fig. 97), the artist painted a narrow blue line beneath the frieze of the large, open exhibition space, thereby expanding on the preexisting ornament. Indeed, Palermo referred to it as *ausschmücken*, "decking out." Next to the old stucco, the blue line seemed cheap and false, bordering on kitsch, as one critic suggested and photographs show. Yet one can infer from other critics' reports that despite its banality the line also caused viewers to feel estranged in the vast, empty space by underlining the large scale of the room.[119]

Similarly, for the 1970 exhibition *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* at Edinburgh's College of Art (figs. 98, 99), Palermo painted a line in the center of the white

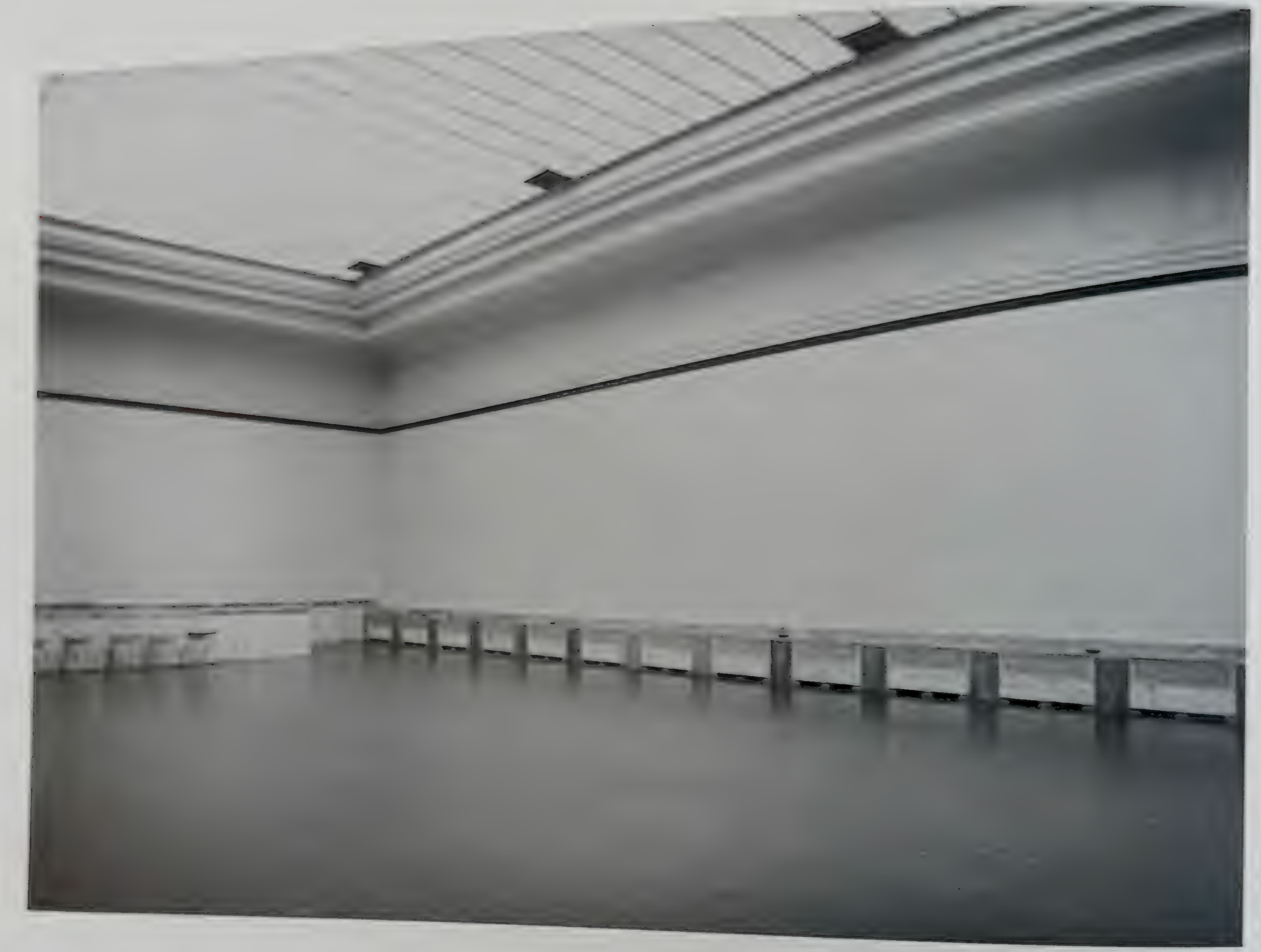


Fig. 97 Untitled wall painting in the large salon, Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, for exhibition *14 x 14*, 19–28 June 1970. Plakafarbe on wall, room: 1,915 x 1,094 x 585 cm.

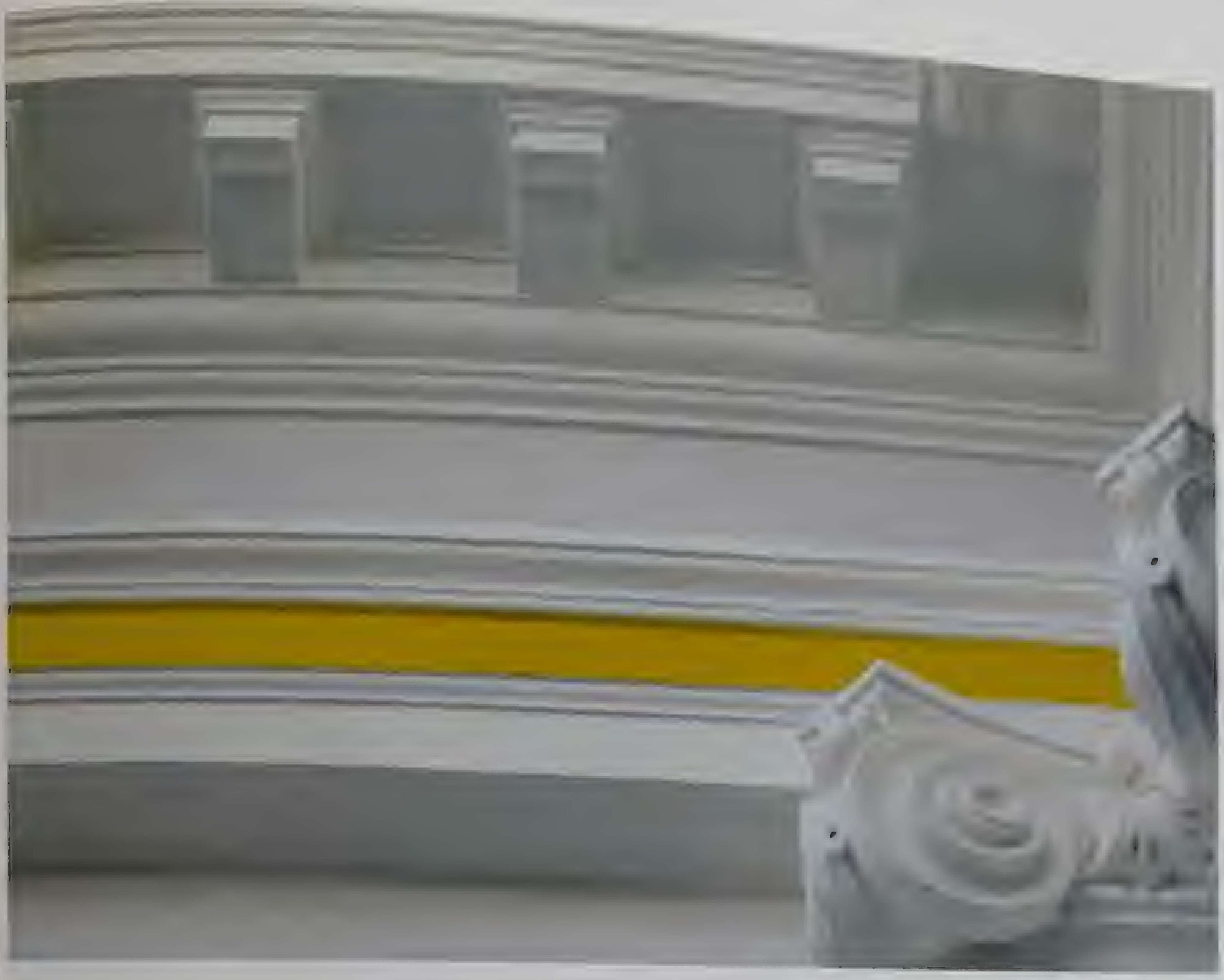


Fig. 98 *Blau/Gelb/Weiss/Rot* (Blue/Yellow/White/Red) (detail), at the *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* exhibition, Edinburgh College of Art, 23 August–12 September 1970, 2005 reconstruction. Acrylic paint on wall, dimensions unknown.

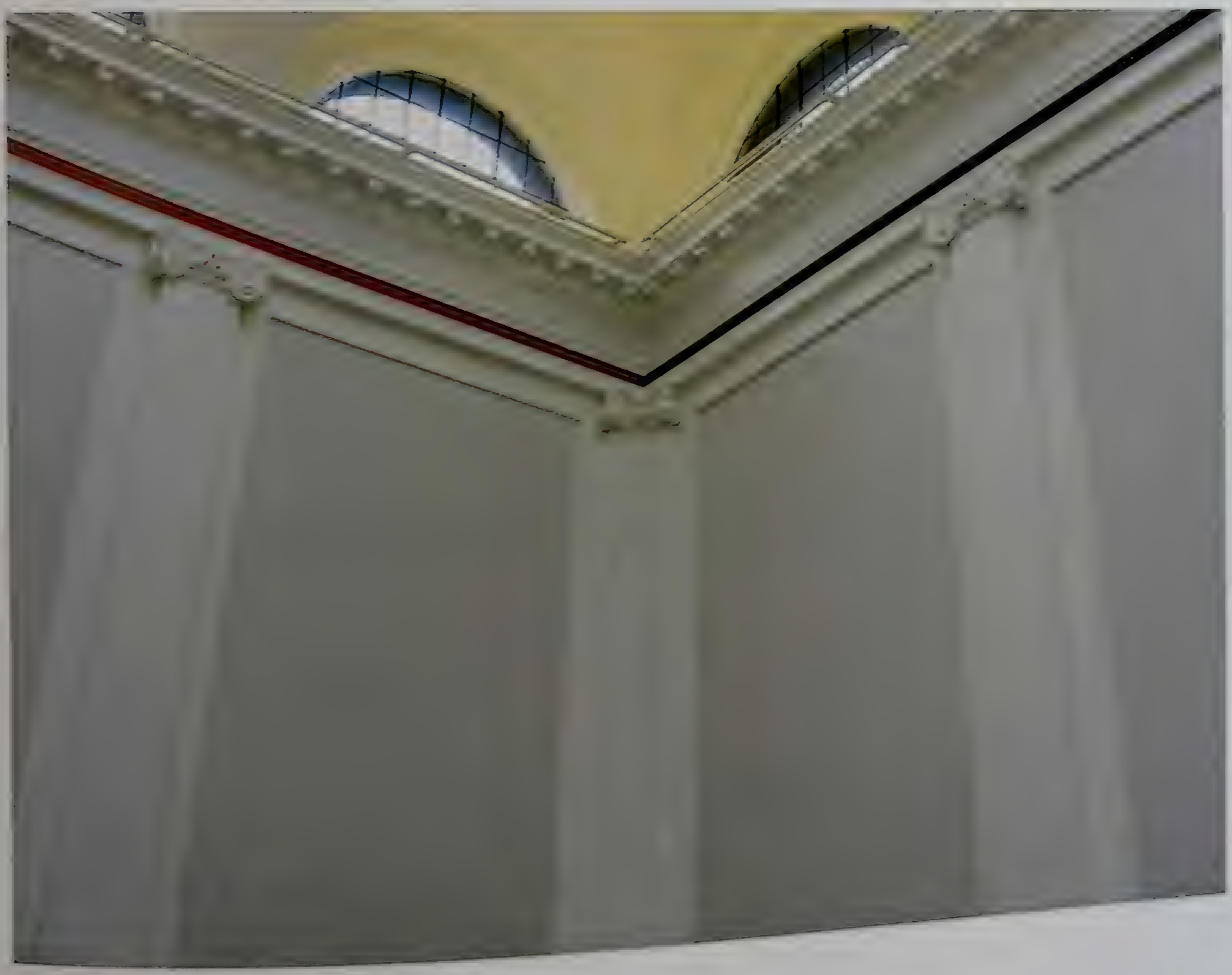


Fig. 99 *Blau/Gelb/Weiss/Rot* (Blue/Yellow/White/Red) (detail), at the *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* exhibition, Edinburgh College of Art, 23 August–12 September 1970, 2005 reconstruction. Acrylic paint on wall, dimensions unknown.

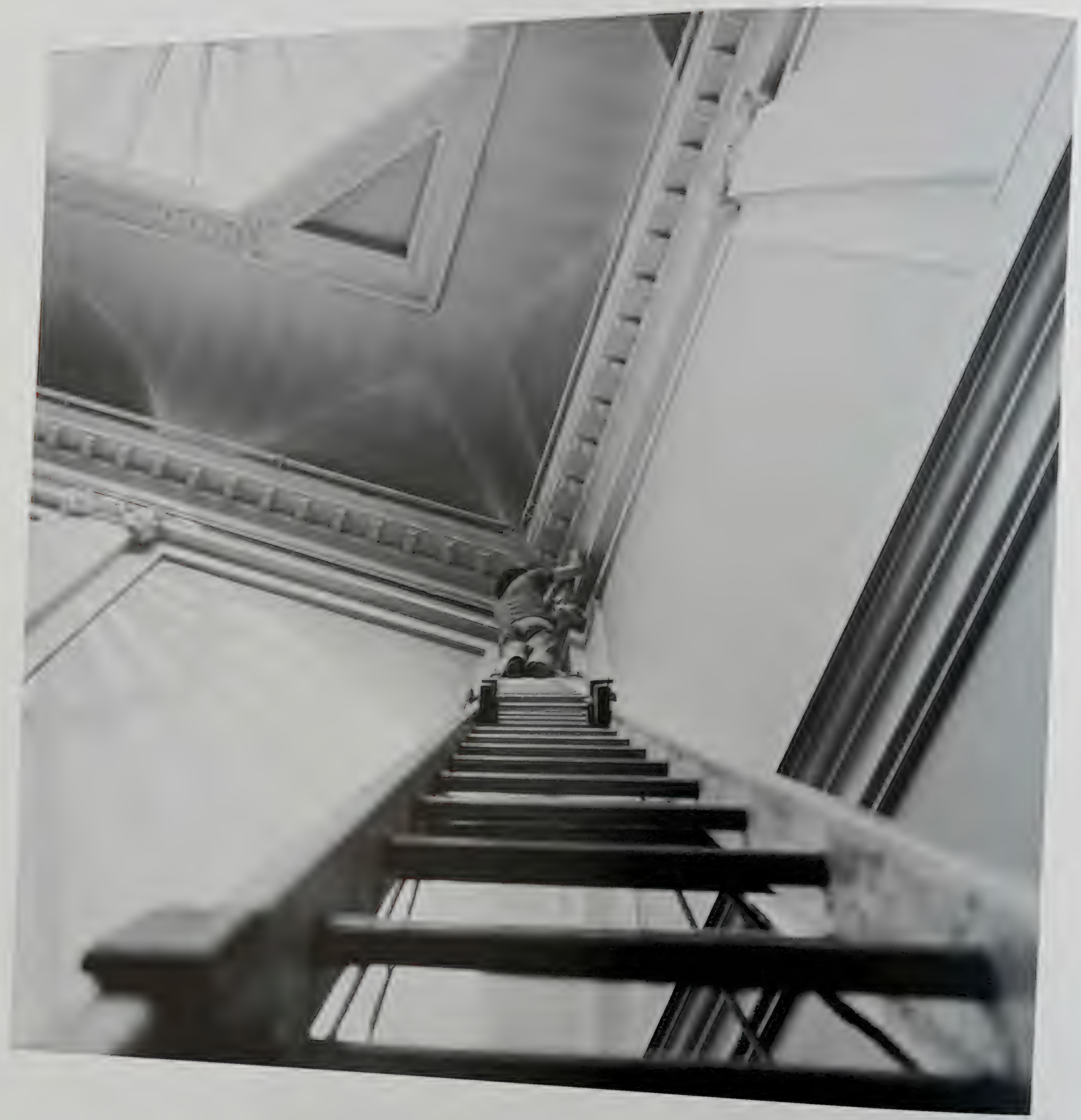


Fig. 100 Palermo painting *Blau/Gelb/Weiss/Rot* (Blue/Yellow/White/Red) at the *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* exhibition, Edinburgh College of Art, 23 August–12 September 1970. Photograph © 2007 Monika Baumgartl, Meerbusch.

architrave on each of the four off-white walls surrounding the grand entrance stairwell of the building: one red, one blue, one yellow, and one white. Palermo had chosen this space early on before seeing it in person; in fact, notes from a conversation that included Palermo and other participating artists indicate that they agreed to "use the main entrance with its columns" and "to challenge rather than hide the frieze architecture."[120] To this day the space remains unchanged, complete with replicas of Parthenon sculptures on the landing and at the top of the stairs, which the "Palermo Restore Project" in 2005 took as an opportunity to reconstruct Palermo's wall painting based on an optical match of color samples.[121] Decoration here too opens up phenomenological and banal aspects in intricate ways comparable perhaps only to the positive/negative wall painting. An experience of the Edinburgh work was and is disorienting, even precarious (as was the installation process, as testified by photographs showing the artist on an extremely tall freestanding ladder; fig. 100). By painting the stripes in different colors, Palermo disrupted the unified neoclassical wall designs and reinforced the latently disorienting effect of the Imperial-style stairway, in which a straight flight of stairs comes to a landing, then turns 180 degrees and becomes two parallel flights. In either climbing or descending the stairs the viewer switches directions two times and thus faces a different-colored stripe three times. This causes the viewer to turn and look back repeatedly in an effort to see the work as a whole and unravel its underlying system. Gazing upward, a viewer pays less attention to his or her movement than might be advisable for a person moving up or down stairs. Although it is impossible ever to see the whole work at once, viewers can slowly understand Palermo's rationale, especially if they watch the light flooding through the skylight change over the course of a day: the dark blue stripe is located on the north side, the yellow on the east, the bright white on the south, and the red on the west. Yet understanding the color system does surprisingly little to ameliorate the disturbing experience of the space, which is the same over and over again. Palermo returned to the idea of playing with a suggestion of systems that remain irresolvable in the context of the times of day in his later work.[122]

As in so many group exhibitions that provided an occasion for Palermo to make a new wall painting, his environmental and phenomenological premise was echoed in other works on view at *STRATEGY: GET ARTS*. The exhibition, whose title is based on a palindrome by André Thomkins, was dedicated to contemporary art from Düsseldorf and organized for the Edinburgh Festival of Art by the local dealer Richard Demarco in collaboration with Karl Ruhrberg of the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and the Zero artist Günther Uecker. In reviewing the show, Guy Brett, like other critics, posited that the best works "challenge the feeling of musty antiquity given by the art school building." He cited as examples a "mechanism repeatedly banging the time-worn door of a life-classroom in the basement" by Uecker, whose other contribution to the exhibition was even more physically threatening: a narrow corridor with knives pushed through the walls facing the visitors on both sides. Brett also remarked upon Klaus Rinke's "coiled water cannon which sends a jet through the front door that you have to squeeze past," which by its location effectively framed Palermo's piece. Stefan Wewerka's installation was even closer in both location and spirit: his smashed chairs littered the stairs to the second floor—making it even harder for visitors to navigate Palermo's wall painting (fig. 101). Other environments included Graubner's *Nebelraum* (Fog Room), discussed above, words projected on walls by Ferdinand Kriwet, and a reflective light sculpture by Adolf Luther.[123]

Paired with this intense engagement of the viewer, which included the experience of color, was an almost flippant attitude, toward color in particular. Generally speaking, Palermo's choice of primary colors seems uninspired half a century after prewar avant-gardists like Piet Mondrian and other DeStijl members turned them into an icon of purity. More

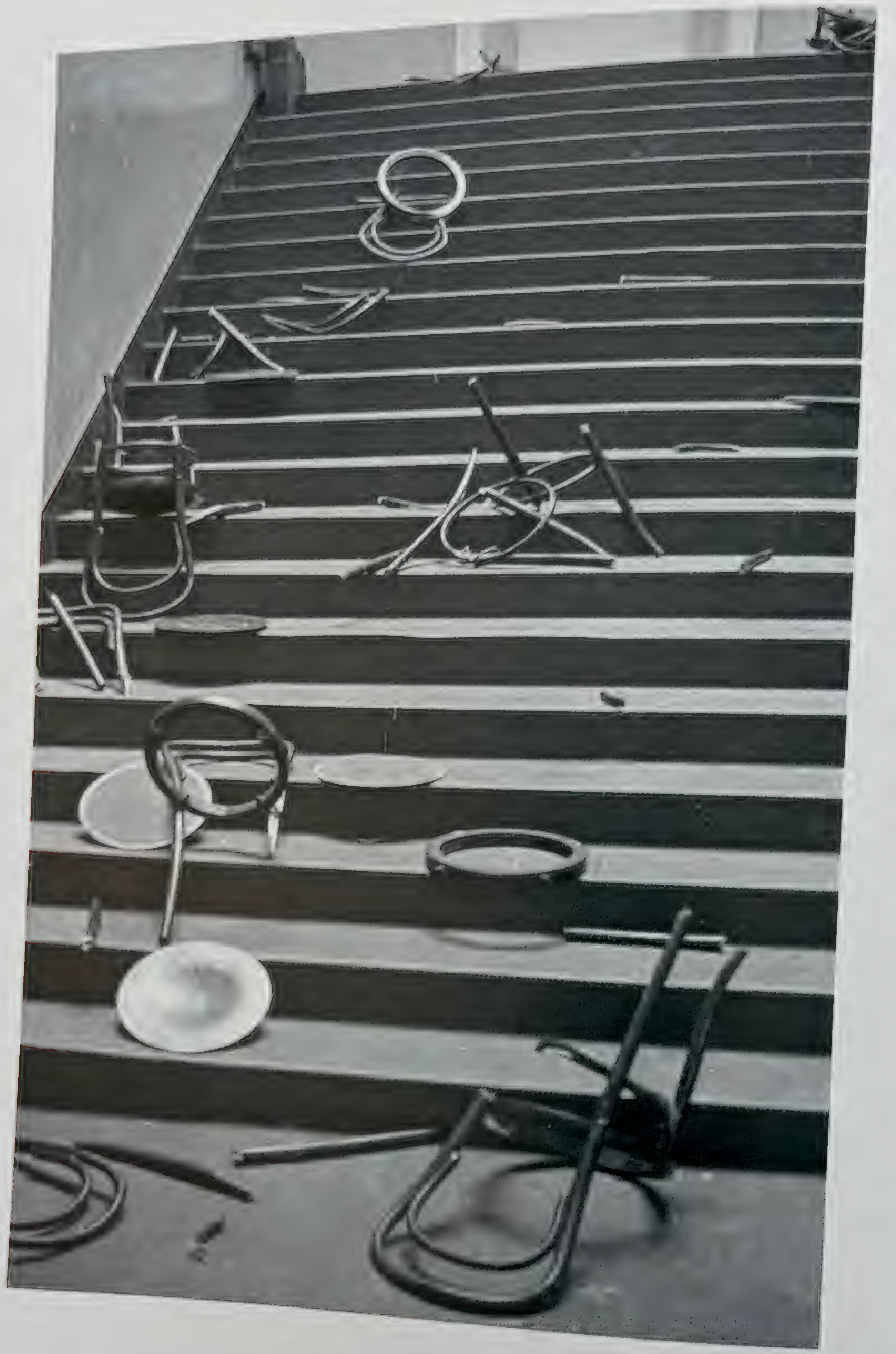


Fig. 101 Stefan Wewerka, installation with unknown title obstructing staircase at the *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* exhibition, Edinburgh College of Art, 23 August–12 September 1970

specifically, the colors were banal not only because they were found but also because they were emblematic, even heraldic. Blue, red, yellow, and white stripes were the insignia of the Edinburgh College of Art, displayed on scarves worn by students at the time and on view in a vitrine set in the entryway during the exhibition. That Palermo probably knew about this emblematic aspect of the colors is suggested by his initial plans to include some form of flag in his installation. In placing the colors on the ceremonial entrance staircase, Palermo tied his wall painting to the medium's popular, heraldic heritage.[124]

The colors Palermo chose for his wall paintings were often appropriated from the realms of design and decoration and thus echoed his interest in found colors in the cloth pictures. The orange color of the Documenta 5 wall painting corresponds to the signature color that the curator and designers had chosen for the exhibition: the ring-binder catalogue was a striking orange, and the locations for the thematic subdivisions were indicated in the catalogue by orange areas in the ground plans.[125] Dahlem speculates that Palermo's blue line for the Baden-Baden wall painting was borrowed from the architect Michael Gottlieb Bindesbøll's Thorvaldsen Museum (1839–48) in Copenhagen, since the Danish neoclassical sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen had been important to Palermo and since, as art historian Susanne Küper noted, Palermo probably visited the museum on the occasion of an exhibition in Copenhagen three years earlier (fig. 102). The reddish-brown color in Palermo's last wall painting in Hamburg was reportedly inspired by a color the artist had seen in a brewery and bar on the Rhine in Düsseldorf.[126] And Richter and Fred Jahn, a partner in the Galerie Heiner Friedrich for a while, recalled that Palermo's choice of ocher for a collaboration with Richter (and thus probably also for the positive/negative wall painting) was inspired by what Palermo referred to as *Bayerischer* (or *Münchener*) *Ocker* (Bavarian or Munich Ocher). Jahn recalls that Palermo "had expressed his wish to choose a color for the wall painting that related to Munich."

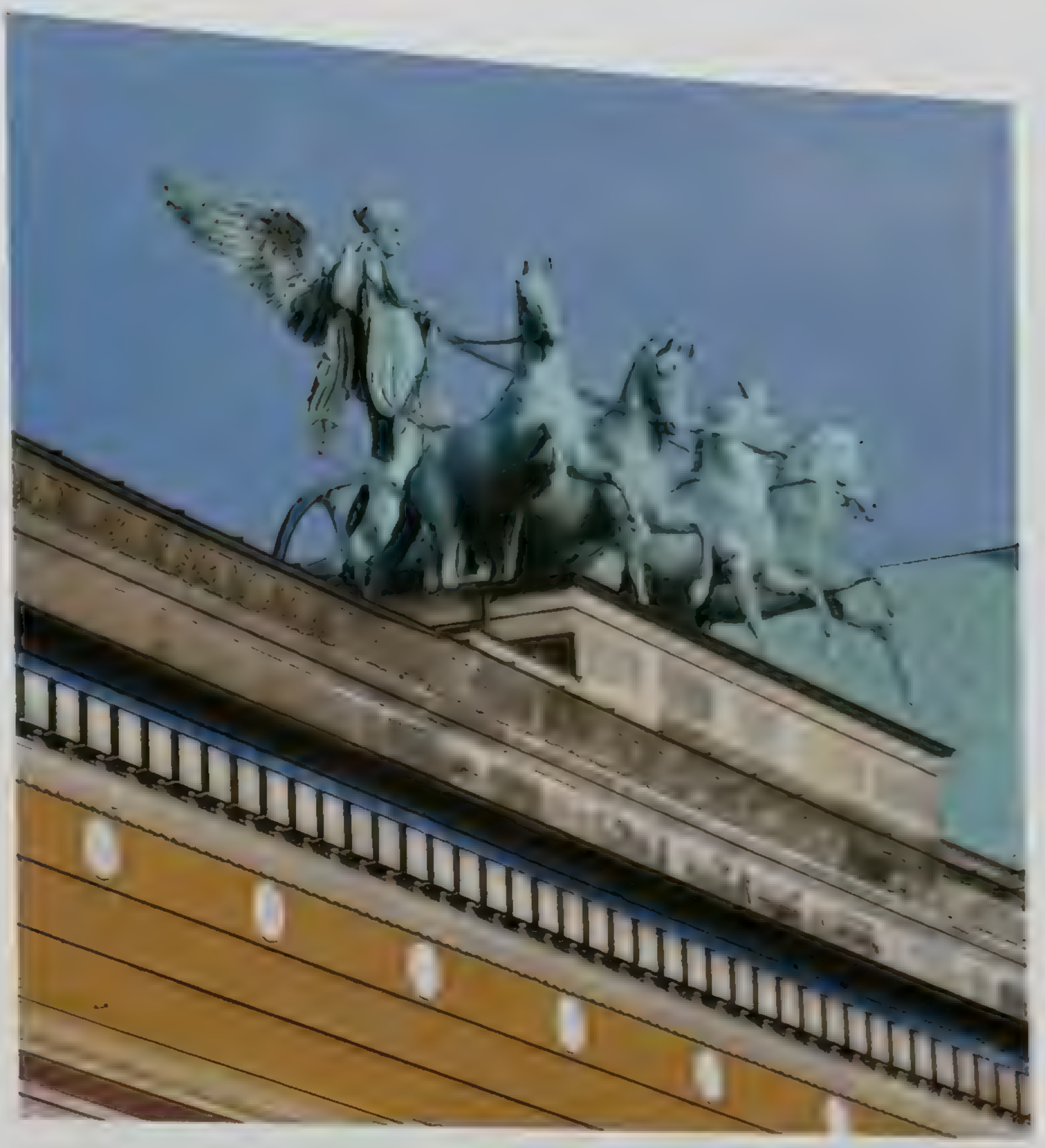


Fig. 102 Michael Gottlieb Bindesbøll, Thorvaldsen Museum (detail exterior), Copenhagen, 1839–48

He described going with Palermo to visit Munich's Ludwigskirche, which was built between 1829 and 1844 by Friedrich von Gärtner and decorated with frescoes by Peter von Cornelius. That unusual church's interior polychrome decoration, especially its blue ceiling with a regular pattern of small golden stars, is structured by means of golden frames; the frescoes are dominated by ocher tones. Ocher more generally dominates the neoclassical architecture of Munich, including the seventeenth-century landmark Theatinerkirche and the facades of the Ludwigstrasse and the Maximilianstrasse, where the Galerie Heiner Friedrich was located (fig. 103).[127] While Bavarians were unlikely to miss the local connotations of the positive/negative wall painting in Munich, the reference may have escaped the Rhineland audience for the follow-up work with Richter in Cologne. That risk may explain why Palermo chose to exaggerate by other means the decorative dimension in the collaborative work, that is, by painting all four walls instead of merely the two facing ones.

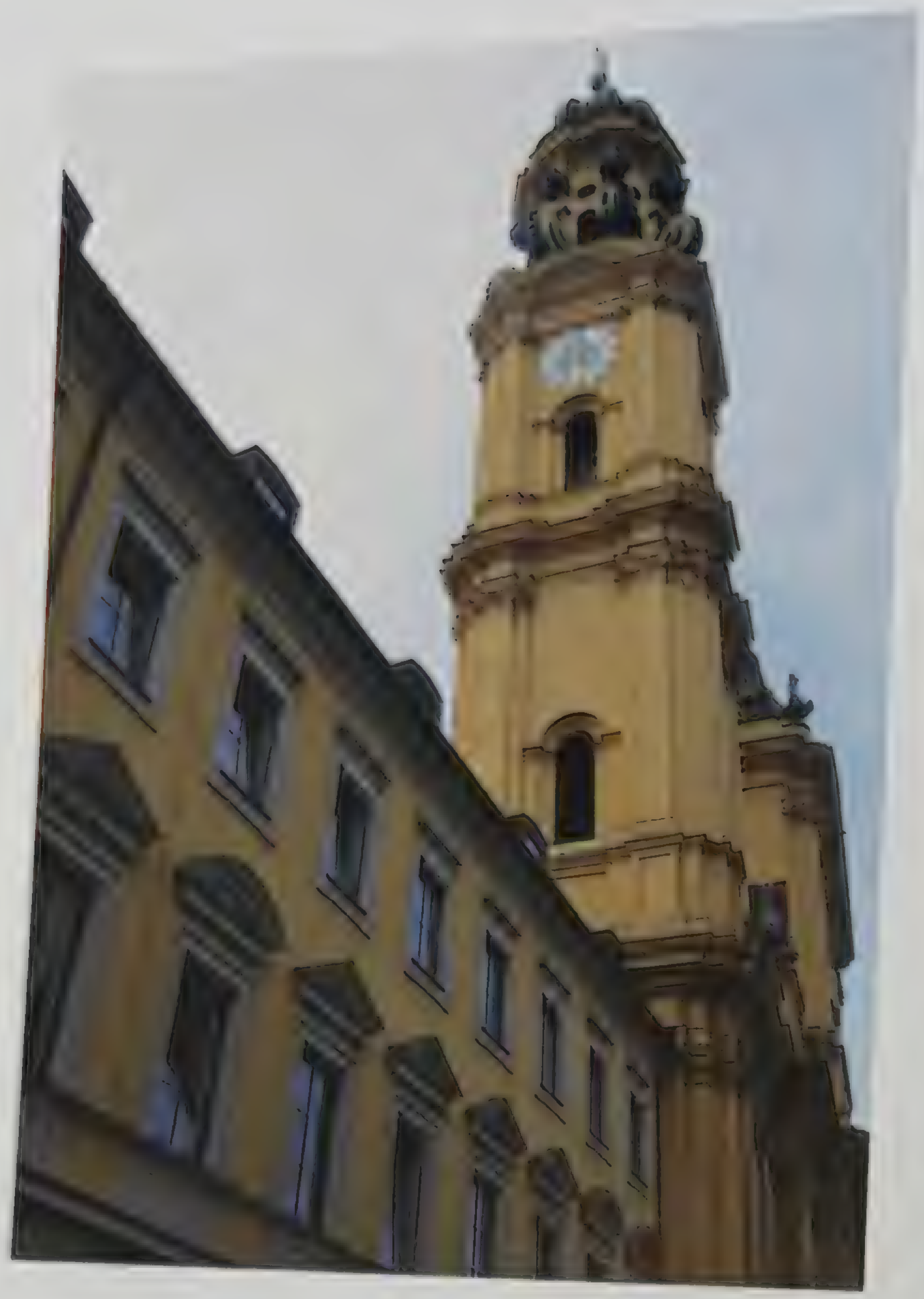


Fig. 103 Agostino Barelli et al., Theatinerkirche (detail exterior), Munich, 1675

As with his interest in the phenomenological and the banal, Palermo's pursuit of the decorative had a historical context. Ornament and decoration had emerged as a major theme in German painting during the 1960s. The 1965 exhibition *Ornament? Ohne Ornament* (Ornament? Without Ornament) in Zurich and Munich had introduced the topic, which was given extensive public attention three years later in another exhibition, *Ornamentale Tendenzen in der zeitgenössischen Malerei* (Ornamental Tendencies in Contemporary Painting) in Berlin and Leverkusen. So-called New Ornamental Painting was the focus of articles and talks by the writer Klaus Hoffmann, whose work culminated in a comprehensive study in 1970.[128] Artists associated with this trend were members of the SYN group and included Klaus Jürgen-Fischer, Rolf Gunter Dienst, Jürgen Claus, Werner Schrieb, and Otmar Alt (fig. 104). Pop and op art, color-field painting, and signal art were also part of these discussions. All this new painting, it was believed, shared an ornamental vocabulary of

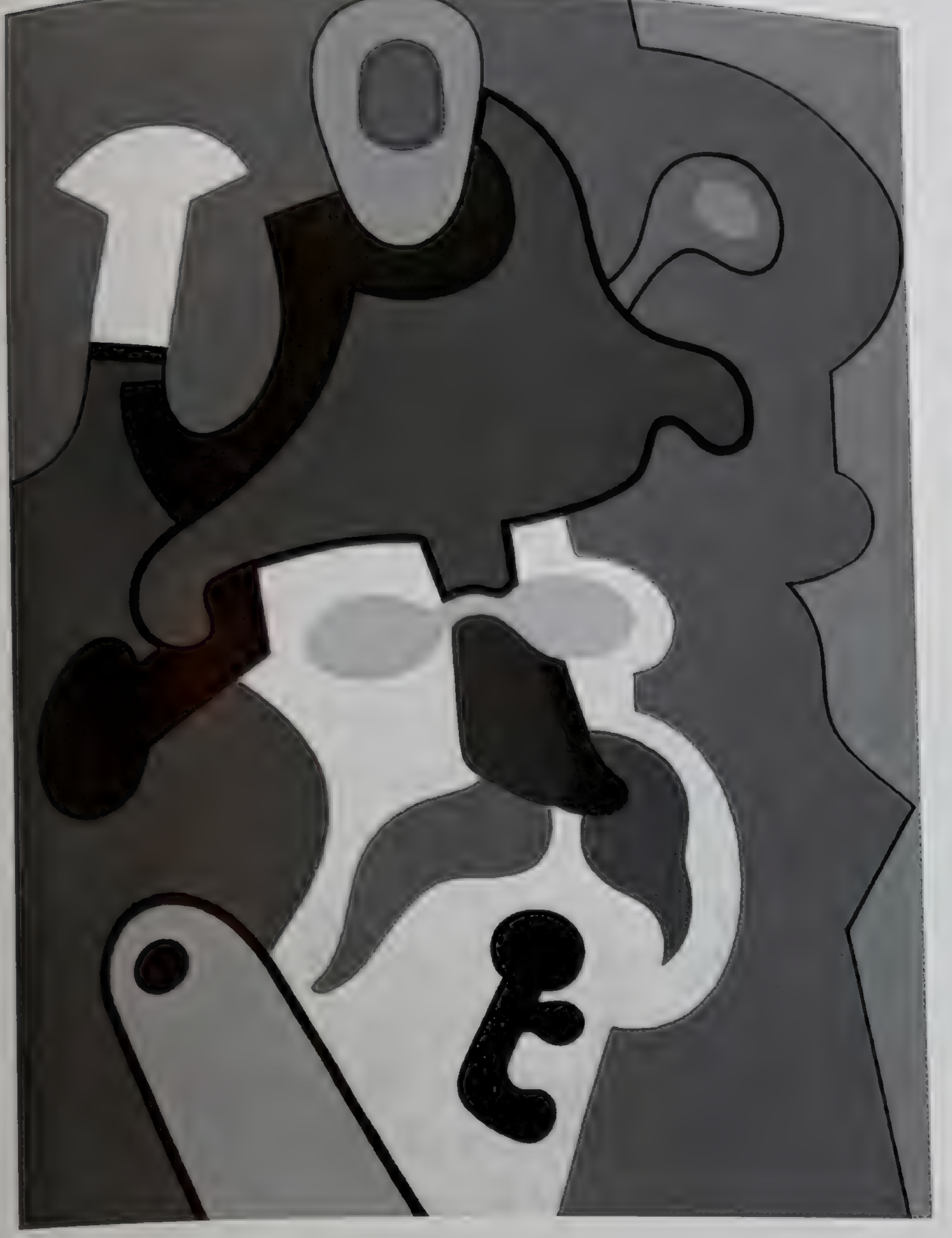


Fig. 104 Otmar Alt, *Selbstbildnis* (Self-Portrait), 1967. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 100 x 75 cm. Private collection. © 2007 Otmar Alt, Hamm.

contour and line, repetition, symmetry, and stylized representation. Unlike Palermo's three-dimensional use of these elements, however, the New Ornamentalists focused exclusively on ornament as it applied to the plane of the canvas. In fact, much effort was spent on distinguishing the quasi-autonomous ornament in painting from "superficial, light-hearted ornamental art, simplistic applied art, flat wall decoration, [and] wallpaper art."[129]

The Derridean parergon—exemplified by the border, decoration, and ornament—problematizes distinctions between what is internal and what is external to a work of art. "Are psychological, economic, political, and technical motives always extrinsic?" Derrida asked.[130] In the tradition of the Austrian art historians Alois Riegl and Ernst Gombrich, who argued for the social, psychological, and historical meanings of ornament, many critics during the 1960s claimed that ornamental painting was historically and socially resonant. The theorist Hans Heinz Holz compared ornaments to hieroglyphs, arguing that their forms carried coded meanings. The ornament, he wrote, has "emblematic character, which potentially makes it akin to heraldry and totems. The social may thus play into it at least indirectly." Hoffmann and Jürgen Claus also understood ornament as a "means of man's self-representation," as part of a human process to understand the world: its laws, its totality, its details.[131] How these abstract shapes encoded "the world" and, above all, what exactly they signified, remained unexplained.

Here lies the first crux of Palermo's wall paintings: they do use decoration to open up meanings about "the world." By playfully exploring different avenues available to him at the time—environments, banality, and decoration—Palermo stumbled onto something rarely pursued: historically resonant abstract painting. The wall paintings are firmly tied to their times on several levels. Decorative forms are used, on the one hand, to participate in environment efforts to heighten viewers' perceptual consciousness, one of several positions in the art and politics debates, and, on the other, to develop the German pop art theme of the banal interior, which was related to the economic miracle. In effect, decoration operates ambivalently: its phenomenological use depends on hyperawareness of the unfamiliar, its banal use on a familiarity that goes almost unnoticed; one use refers to a climax of criticality, the other to the epitome of complacency. Decoration in the wall paintings thus creates an interplay between these poles, which essentially coexist yet also alternate by questioning each other. (Because of this alternation, Palermo's wall paintings are not ironic, for that would imply a hierarchy between the phenomenological and the banal, with one being the overt meaning and the other the implied one.) Palermo's wall paintings do not simply support or reject art's potential to improve our perception, our criticality, and our world. They are more nuanced. Amid the utopian debates about art and politics, and the revival of the prewar avant-garde's vision, the wall paintings project through their banal qualities caution and skepticism about the success of critical art, especially in a nation enthralled with its "economic miracle." Yet in the aftermath of that consumerist utopia come true, the phenomenological qualities of the wall paintings push toward critical reflection.

Appropriately so, for these were times that called for skepticism toward both a knee-jerk criticality *and* a blissful lack of criticality. When Palermo began to exhibit his wall paintings at the end of 1968, much of what that year had stood for was starting to disintegrate, especially in Germany. Students there had far less popular support than their French peers, and they were unable to disrupt state authority to the same extent. Following 1968 the united front of the APO fractured into small splinter groups, ranging from subcultural living communes to numerous Leninist or Maoist Communist K-Groups to violent organizations like the RAF (Red Army Faction). In the wake of these developments Palermo was one of the few artists who questioned the social and political effectiveness of their artistic practice. In turn, following the aversion of a threatened recession, many Germans were trying hard to hold on to their newfound standards of living and acted as if nothing had ever happened.[132]

ABSTRACTION AND DECORATION

Palermo's wall paintings resonate historically not only with contemporary debates on art and politics and the aftermath of the German economic miracle but also more broadly with the tradition of abstract painting. Palermo persisted in painting at a time when the medium, with the exception of New Ornamental Painting, had largely fallen out of favor—environment artists chose new experimental media over traditional ones, and German pop artists mocked both painting and abstraction. This may be the reason why today Palermo is widely considered a painter's painter and an artist's artist. In his subtle solutions, he always optimistically chose open-ended possibilities over foreclosure. Palermo's wall paintings cleared a meaningful space for painting amid the seemingly irreconcilable poles of phenomenological effects and banal qualities. In the course of doing so, they confronted head-on the ambivalent role decoration had assumed with respect to abstraction. By venturing into decoration, Palermo engaged abstract painting's own history, its foundations and fears.

A comprehensive treatment of the complex relation between the development of abstract painting and decoration remains to be written.[133] Symbolists and fauves, for example, favored decoration as a means of overcoming the depiction of the visible world in pursuit of the expressive potential of pure color and form. Maurice Denis praised Paul Gauguin as a "decorator" who "made use of the flat application of color and the precise contour. His art has more in common with stained glass than with oil painting." Matisse, in his use of patterns and arabesques to create a nonhierarchical sense of unity, was no less committed to the decorative.[134] At the same time, many abstract painters worried about producing "mere" decoration, about the danger that their work would become nonart and insignificant. Around the time of his

First Abstract Watercolor, Wassily Kandinsky noted, "A terrifying abyss of all kinds of questions, a wealth of responsibilities stretched before me. And most important of all: What is to replace the missing object? The danger of ornament revealed itself clearly to me; the dead semblance of stylized forms I found merely repugnant."[135] Clement Greenberg eloquently summed up the simultaneous reliance on and fear of decoration in abstract painting. "Decoration is the specter that haunts modernist painting, and part of the latter's formal mission is to find ways of using the decorative against itself." Late impressionism and fauvism, for Greenberg, "sharpen the problem by increasing the tension between decorative means and non-decorative ends."[136]

Decoration was long felt by artists to be threatening because of its nonart connotations. For Derrida, "This additive . . . is threatening. Its use is critical. It involves a risk."[137] Many writers on Palermo have thus ignored or actively refuted the decorative aspects that I believe are central to his wall paintings. Based on a more narrow view of decorative wall painting, Bernhart Schwenk wrote, "In contrast to conventional wall painting, Palermo did not employ the sign on the wall in the sense of decoration or an ornament. . . . Palermo's painting was supposed neither to cover or hide the wall nor to negate the architecture, which was the goal of illusionistic painting."[138] Küper has argued that Palermo's technique differentiates his wall paintings from classicizing room decorations, noting, for example, his practice of using a brush rather than a roller and his habit of touching up by hand the lines he created with masking tape. With regard to the first, we cannot be certain what visual impact this had, but the technique may rather have accentuated the banal quality of decoration. With regard to the second, we do not know whether he did so to loosen up the straight line, as she claims, or only to hide the irregularities created by the masking tape. Küper grants that Palermo "played with the sharp division between art and everyday as much as with the one between spatial decoration and the visual arts." In the end, however, she believes that the wall paintings show "how close Palermo moved toward the border of wall decoration," a claim that still implies an opposition between abstraction and decoration rather than the complicated, at times daring, negotiation of these terms that I propose for them.[139]

The wall paintings operate within two gray zones: the area between the phenomenological and the banal and the space between abstraction and decoration. What is that point at which acceptable decorative qualities become a threat? How banal, how obviously found, and how much part of the everyday environment can abstract painting be and still be noticed, still have a perceptual impact, and still pass as art? Some early oil paintings by Palermo, dating from 1965, addressed these questions through the lens of decoration. *Flipper* (fig. 105), for example, is a grid of red and white squares delimited by blue lines, an essentially modular grid that appears to be cut off on the left. The cropping (exaggerated even further in a 1970 print of the same motif) visually betrays its found, transferred nature, if not necessarily its origin: the side of a pinball machine, called *Flipper* in German, in Palermo's favorite bar. Here we have the decorative virtues of dazzling and flickering colors, and of flat and all-over surfaces, but we also have the decorative threat that this is simply a commonplace, pretty pattern.[140] Pia Gottschaller recently proposed a correction of the painting's title based on the inscription "R./H." found both on the stretcher bar and on the reverse of the canvas, a reference to Ratinger Hof, the name of the bar where the pinball machine stood. Given that the image reappears in drawing and print form in 1970 under the title *Flipper*, Gottschaller speculates that Palermo may have continued to refer to the painting as *Flipper* because the "R./H." was too cumbersome. Almost two years into the production of his wall paintings, however, the artist may have been additionally motivated to use the alternate title in order to make accessible to viewers the visual connotations and conceptual apparatus of its decorative basis.[141]

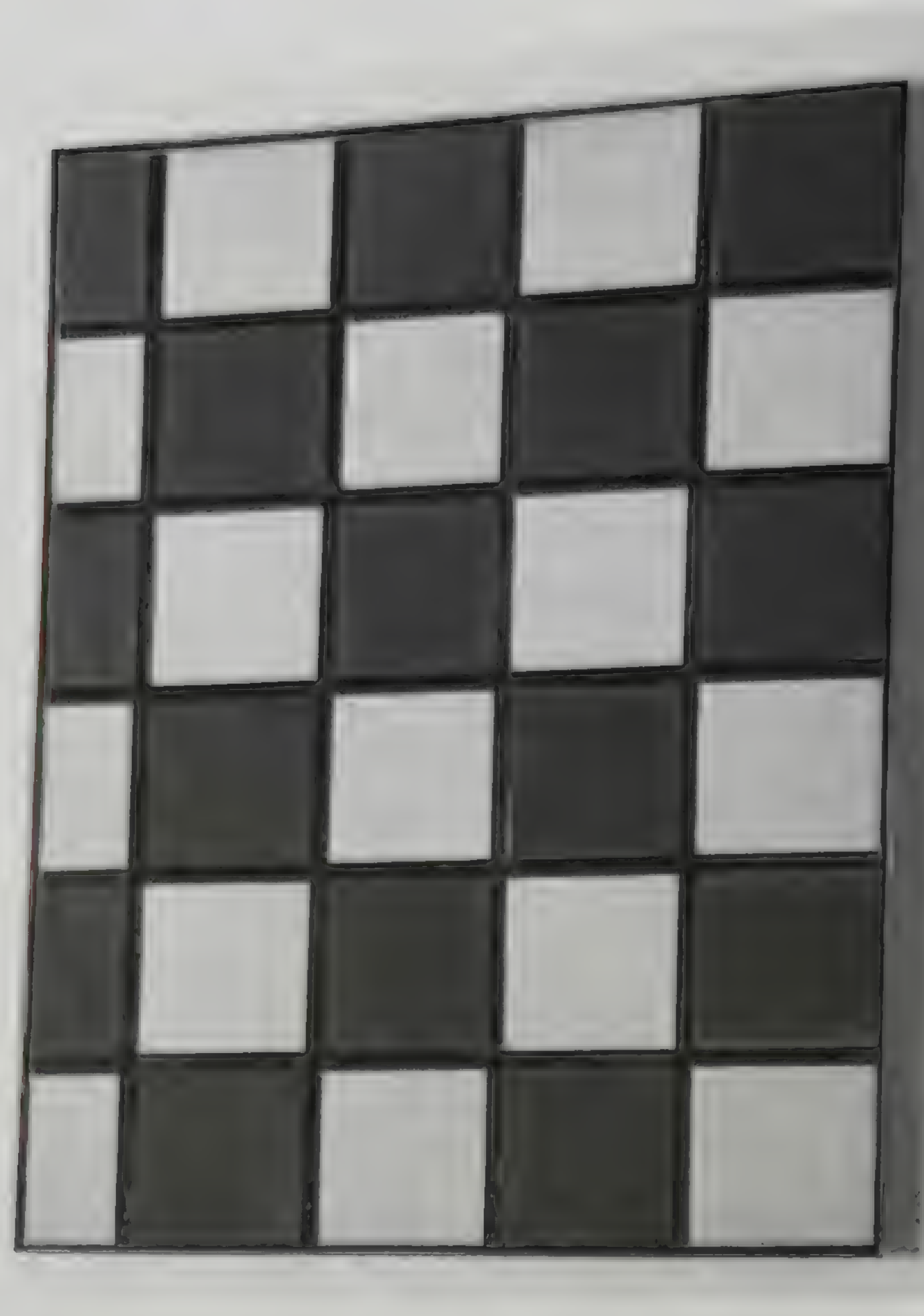


Fig. 105 *Flipper* (*Wvz* 22), 1965. Oil on canvas, 89 x 69.5 cm. Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.

To see how this ambivalent view of decoration vis-à-vis abstraction enters the wall paintings, let us turn one last time to the positive/negative wall painting. The ocher wall places the viewer at a contemplative distance, for it reads as a monochrome picture, on a white wall or in a white frame, thus embodying many of the virtues of the decorative in abstract painting: nonobjectivity, planarity, and color intensity.[142] The white wall, on the other hand, is part of the viewer's space in that it reads as a white wall framed by ocher ornament, thus making the modernist nightmare of the decorative come true: it is barely noticed, blending in with the architecture and immersed in our actual environment. Palermo dramatically juxtaposed the banality of decoration with the decorative as large-scale abstract painting. In this installation, the space between the two is decisively open. It is a space for the viewer both to occupy and to contemplate.

Palermo painted his last wall painting proper in 1973 at the Kunstverein in Hamburg (fig. 106).[143] The Hamburg exhibition area consisted of a large room featuring a central formation of six freestanding walls, which Palermo painted an even reddish brown. A suitable ending to Palermo's career as a wall painter, this work overstated the case made above all in the positive/negative wall painting: the simultaneous existence of merely painted walls and an imposing gigantic monochrome that was now a sculptural object.[144]

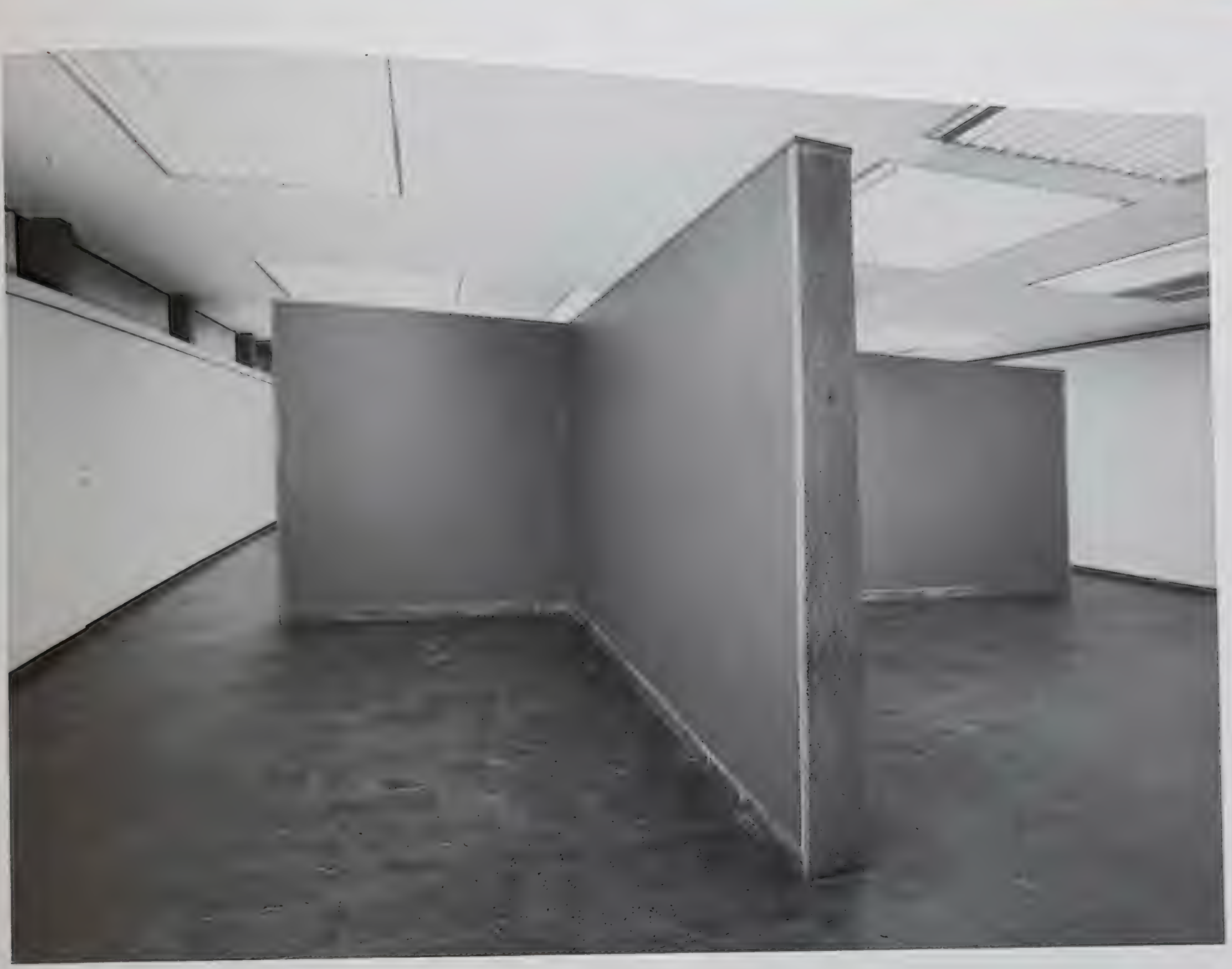


Fig. 106 Untitled wall painting at the Kunstverein, Hamburg, 10–18 March 1973. Wall paint, as a substitute for originally planned rust-preventive undercoating, on walls, free-standing walls: 315 cm height x 1,680 cm total length. Fragment preserved by Hamburger Kunsthalle.

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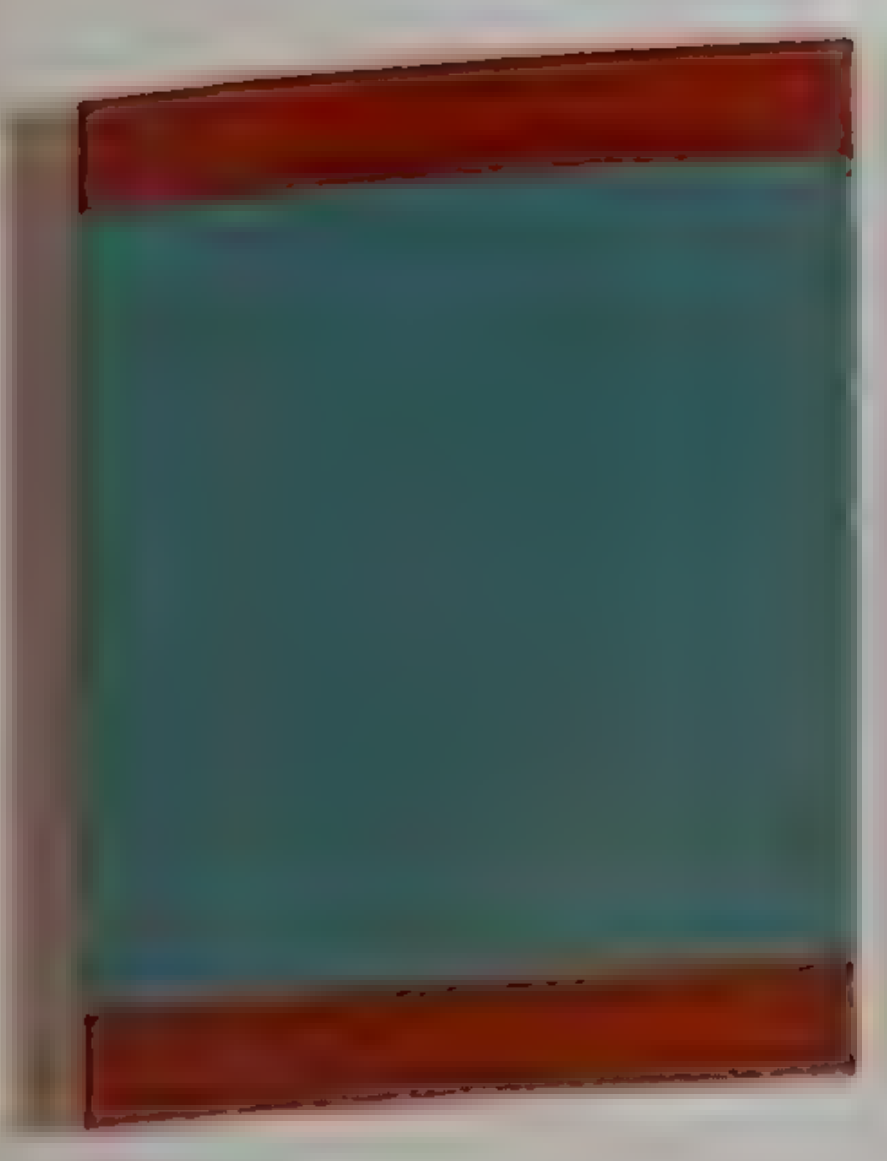
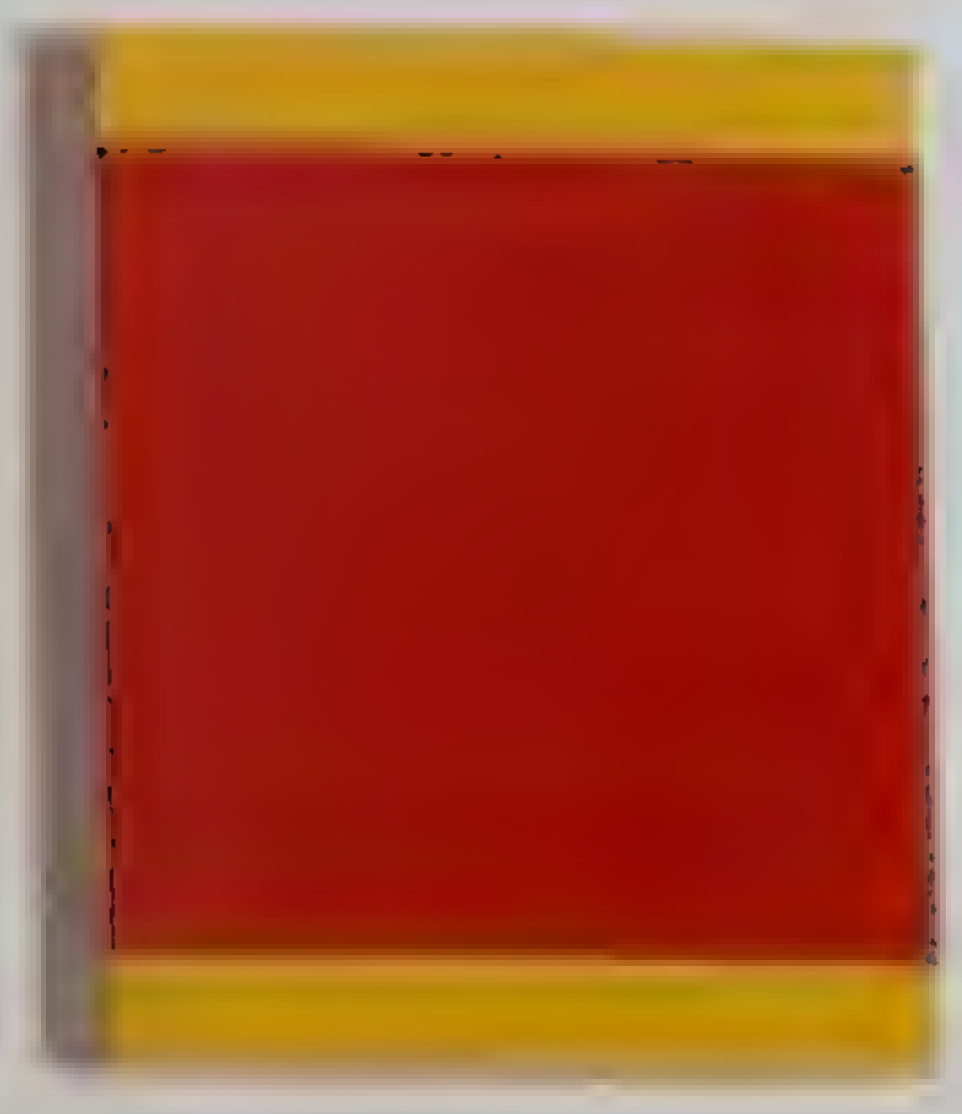
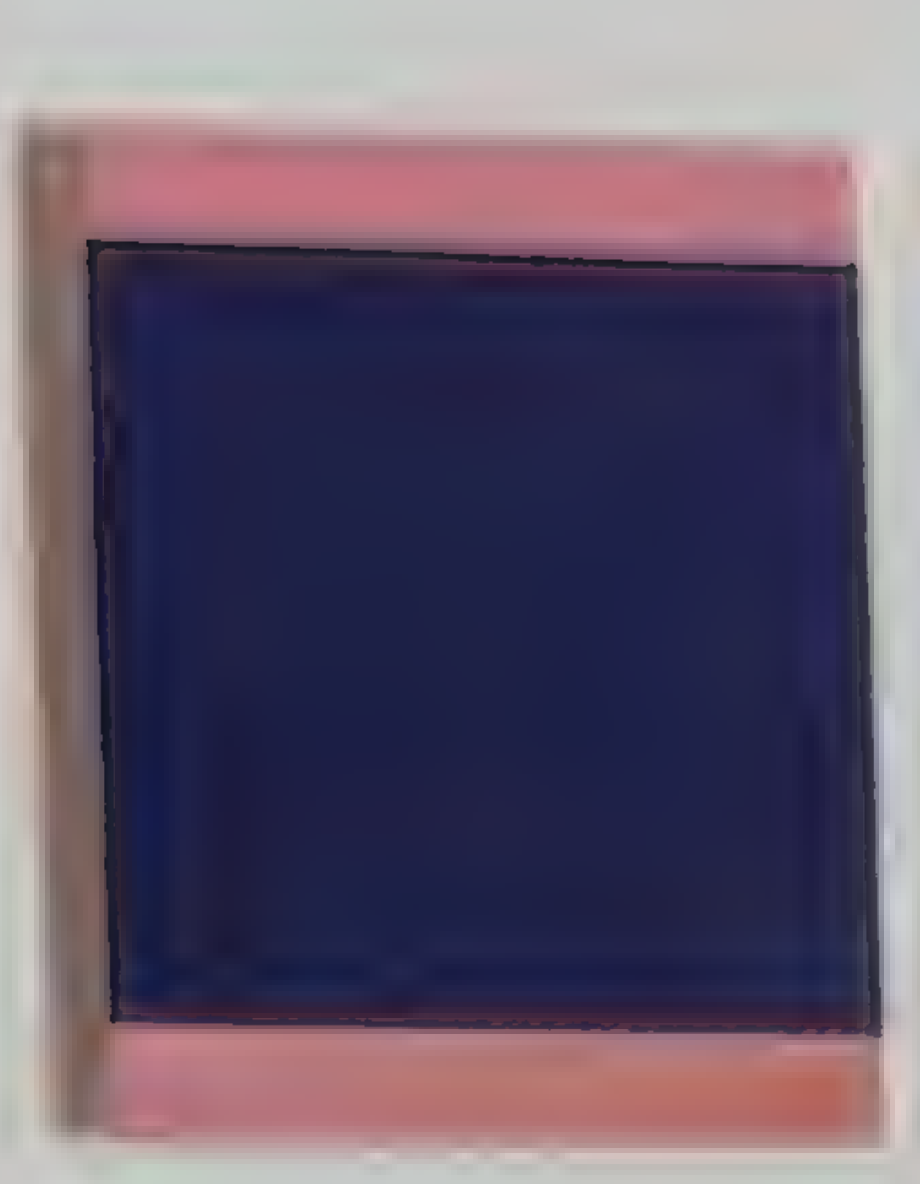
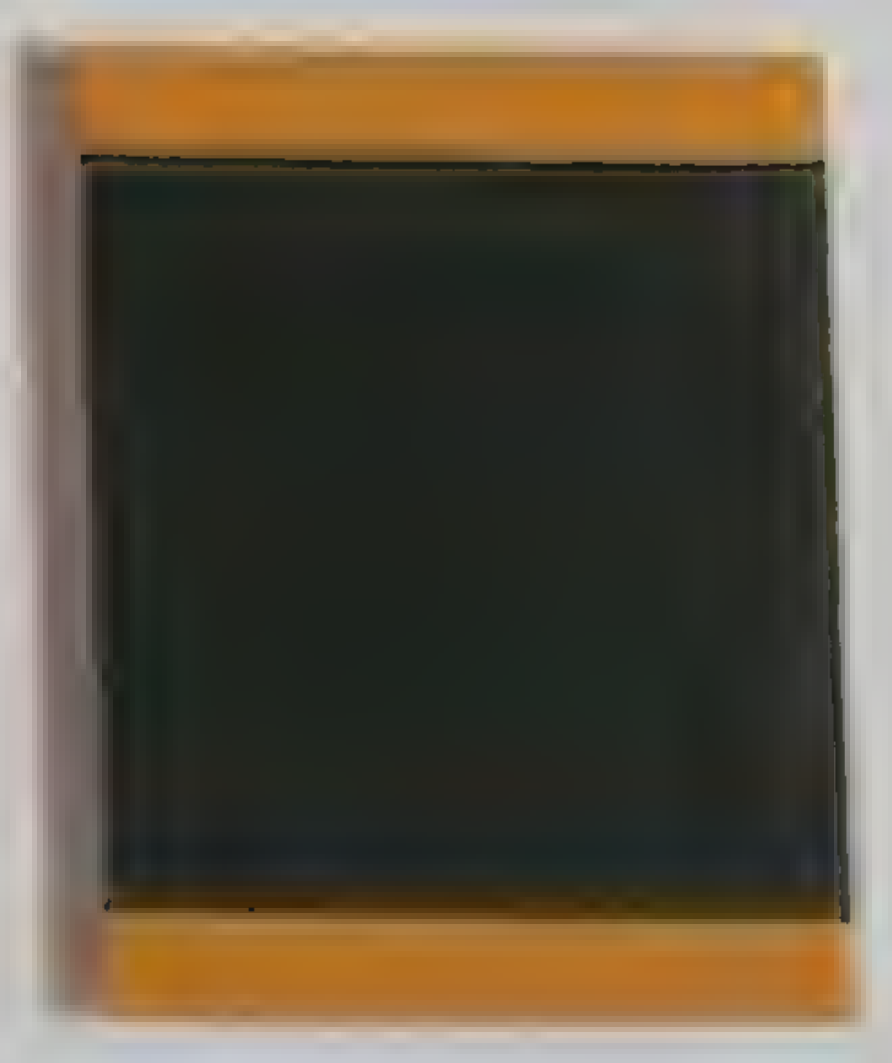








METAL PICTURES, 1973–1977

PLAYING WITH AMERICAN ART

Palermo had a passion for America. The so-called *Metallbilder*, metal pictures, reflect this passion, which led the artist both to preserve and to move beyond national conceptions of art in an increasingly international art world.[1] Palermo's metal pictures engage in a specifically German misreading of nationally defined characteristics of American art, while at the same time commenting on and moving away from the hermetic aesthetic discourses that characterized the New York art world in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Long before he developed an interest in art, Palermo was fascinated by American culture. He reportedly began listening to jazz in high school and grew especially fond of Thelonious Monk, to whom he later dedicated one of his triangle multiples. He liked Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and spaghetti westerns; he worked as a bartender at Creamcheese, the legendary Düsseldorf nightspot that tried to re-create the atmosphere of a New York hangout; and he badly wanted "one of those big American cars." His pseudonym was taken from the American mobster manager of Sonny Liston.[2]

From early in his artistic career, Palermo was curious about American art. The 1965 cover of the special "Neue Abstraktion—New Abstraction" issue of the German art magazine *Das Kunstwerk* became the compositional focus of one of his early paintings (fig. 107). As part of a trend toward "formalist" abstract painting and sculpture stretching across many countries, this issue extensively covered contemporary artists in the United States—Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, and Frank Stella—as well as a few select Germans.[3] Palermo's painting consists of three square canvases —yellow, red, and black—placed side by side, with the cover of the magazine pasted onto the central one. Horizontal lines—also yellow, red, and black—extend across the three panels. The painting thus featured some of the main characteristics of what came to be understood in Germany as "American" art: seriality, the painting as object (the three panels are separate entities), and planar, uniform color application. This painting also contained elements that would become central to Palermo's metal pictures, which he produced after relocating to the United States: the horizontal extension of several parts, the simple series that becomes unexpectedly complex, the play with continuity and discontinuity by means of different panels and horizontal stripes, and the use of the German national colors (though read backward) black, red, and yellow (as a common substitute for gold).

A contemporary photograph shows Palermo in front of the painting. If the artist struck an uneasy pose for the photographer, this may have resulted not just from his youth—Palermo had just turned twenty-two—but also from his already emerging sense of dissatisfaction with this programmatic backdrop. Palermo later destroyed the painting, perhaps because of its naive and unresolved inclusion of a magazine cover, perhaps because he was not ready for such a direct, complex, and difficult engagement with American art. Recalling the cloth pictures, which Palermo began to make a couple of years later and which confronted American color-field painting and the discourse about modernist painting in more sophisticated ways, we can see that Palermo worked through his intuitive interest in American painting step by step. It was only in his metal pictures and after his move to New York that Palermo's love affair with American art became full-fledged and he confidently dwelled on its slippages to make it entirely new. If the cloth pictures had slipped across the boundaries between modernist painting and commodity culture, the metal pictures liberated central traits of color-field painting, minimalism, and conceptual art from their discursive constraints.

Palermo conveyed his passion to his friends and colleagues, introducing them to postwar American art and artists. Mel Bochner recalls that Palermo was unusually open toward American artists, not competitive with them: "Palermo was the only German artist who came to my opening [at Galerie Konrad Fischer in May 1969] and talked to me."[4] That American art played an important role in Palermo's work

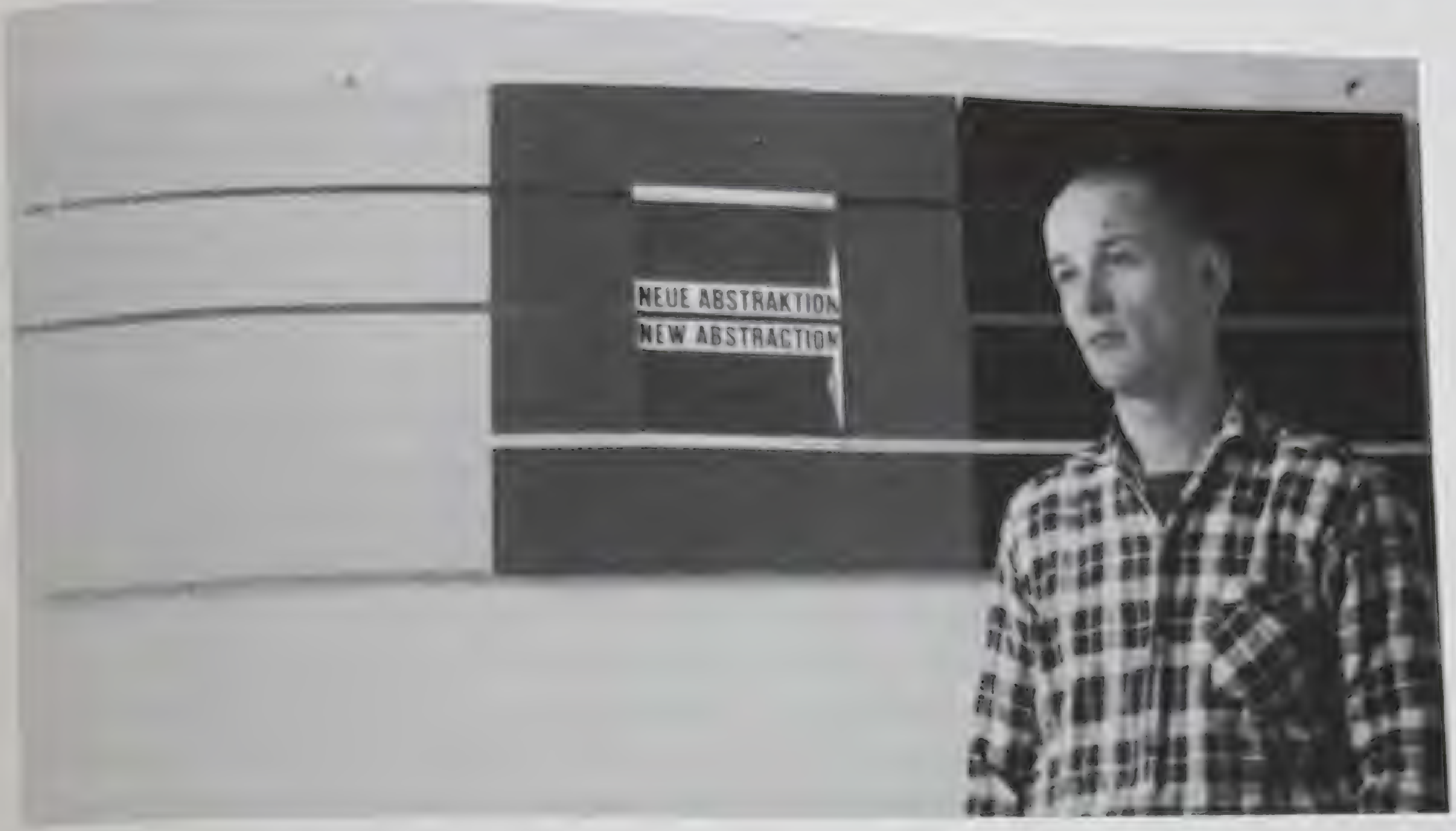


Fig. 107 Palermo in front of *Neue Abstraktion* (New Abstraction) (destroyed), 1965

has been widely acknowledged, but different critics understand this role in different ways.[5]

Several critics have claimed that Palermo was influenced by American artists such as Barnett Newman, Ellsworth Kelly, and Mark Rothko. Newman especially was considered relevant because of Palermo's use of "color as a mental space," his "real and concrete" conception of the picture, and his move "away from the picture."[6] Palermo was most consistently labeled a minimalist on the basis of a purist, simple, or reductive aspect to his work, its stress on objecthood, and its expansion into space. As had often been the case in the American art world, the minimalist label was frequently applied in a derogatory fashion.[7] Many exhibitions and survey books simply grouped Palermo with American artists or assumed that they had a similar sensibility.[8] Benjamin Buchloh and the late Stefan Germer both argued that this shared sensibility grew out of similar historical situations: Palermo and his American contemporaries discovered and worked through prewar avant-garde art in parallel manners.[9] Yet other writers cited Palermo as an example of the dialogue between European and American art during this period. If Palermo learned from Newman, Kelly, Brice Marden, and Richard Tuttle, one American critic reckoned, other American artists in turn learned from Palermo, for example, Sherrie Levine and Julian Schnabel, who for a while owned one of Palermo's cloth pictures.[10] German critics and artists, in particular, defensively seeking to protect Palermo from accusations of derivativeness, argued that though similar, his work ultimately differed from that of American artists. This was clearly on the mind of Joseph Beuys when he described his student's work three years after his death: "The radiance saturated by poetry is something that his work is still offering. Even if it is sometimes located within an alien context, and there's only one piece on view, like now in Stuttgart, where the Barnett Newman is hanging, the Kelly, and then the Palermo—he doesn't compare badly, he holds his own entirely. He just has a far greater porosity than the others. He points to something different."[11]

In the most extensive discussion of this subject to date, Bernhart Schwenk pursued this model of similarity and difference, focusing on four American painters: Stella, Kelly, Rothko, and Newman. Like Stella, Palermo treated the painting as an object by collapsing motif and format. Yet Palermo retained the expressive brushwork abandoned by Stella, lacked the American's strict sense of order and regularity, and in his cloth pictures, unlike Stella, returned to the illusionism of the painting as window (an arguable observation about the cloth pictures, in my opinion, but also about Stella in light of his widely noted return to illusionism in the mid-sixties). In Kelly's case, Palermo reportedly returned from his visit of Documenta 4 in 1968 with great respect for the American's work and acknowledged that there were analogies between it and his own work. In Schwenk's estimation, Palermo shared with Kelly a proximity to constructivist art through the use of geometric forms, an interest in the tradition of French impressionism as opposed to serial systems, and a model of abstraction based on a direct experience of the world. Nevertheless, Palermo, unlike Kelly, insisted on the gesture, on imprecision and imperfection. With regard to Rothko and Palermo, Schwenk pointed to a shared sense of overwhelming viewers with the color and size of their work, and he connected Palermo's September 1974 visit to the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas, to the development of his metal pictures. Rothko's paintings in the chapel evidence an interest in the changing conditions of light, something that also engaged Palermo in the metal pictures; in addition, one of the metal pictures employs the exact plum color that is central to Rothko's installation. In contrast to Rothko, however, Palermo secularized the viewer's experience of time. Rather than aiming for an abstract, transcendental experience, Palermo pursued, in Schwenk's words, "the natural mysteries of the times of day, light phenomena, biological cycles."[12] Finally, despite Palermo's great admiration for Newman, Schwenk notes points of departure from Newman's work, especially in the metal pictures: the use of a horizontal division, a sense of fragmentation, and an interest in the temporal experience of the viewer, as opposed to the spatial experience explored by Newman.[13]

Schwenk's conclusions regarding Palermo's relation to contemporaneous American art are significant but remain only tentatively connected to these observations. For one, he writes, Palermo "develops the temporal aspect partially enacted by these American works solely based on color. He secularizes the mystery of the transcendent and visualizes it, without explaining it." Schwenk himself does not explain or develop this idea further. In addition, "Palermo's intentions aimed to instrumentalize the findings of a 'specifically American' art and use them in a new way based on Beuys's conception of the historicity and meaningfulness [*Geschichtlichkeit und Bedeutungshaftigkeit*] of art."[14] In light of the evidence he discusses, Schwenk's historicity appears to be confined to art historical influences. I agree that questions of history and meaning are central to Palermo's work, but I would argue that the metal pictures reflect not just in terms of art history but more broadly on the historical conditions of art making during the early to mid-seventies. In fact, as Schwenk intimates but never develops, Palermo's metal pictures reconfigured the American models. Palermo helped shift the relation between American and German art from one defined by fierce competition and alleged national differences to one of increasingly fluid exchanges and peaceful coexistence within a unified international (Western) art world.

AMERICAN ART IN GERMANY

During the 1960s, Palermo had only limited access to American art in the form of art magazines, galleries, museums, traveling exhibitions, and catalogues. Not least in light of his incorporation of the cover of *Das Kunstwerk*—the leading mainstream German magazine of contemporary art at that time—into *Neue Abstraktion* (New Abstraction), it seems likely that he regularly flipped through the art magazines available at the library of the Düsseldorf academy. As we can see in the pages of *Das Kunstwerk*, these widely circulated, well-illustrated art magazines—a new phenomenon after the war—both increased access to American art in Europe and "Americanized" the reporting on German art. Starting with the October 1962 issue, the magazine was published under the bilingual title *Das Kunstwerk—The Work of Art*, and letters from New York by Dore Ashton and Lil Picard were printed in English. Advertisements for American galleries appeared with increasing frequency, and American art was covered more and more frequently: in reviews of exhibitions in America, reviews of American art in Europe, and finally, a theme issue, "Art in New York," in June 1966.[15]

During the early sixties Palermo's friends—Richter, Lueg, and Polke—all followed *Art International*, published primarily in English by James Fitzsimmons in Lugano, Switzerland. The magazine covered mainly American art, both in feature articles and in letters from New York written by leading American critics like Michael Fried, Barbara Rose, and Max Kozloff. The Düsseldorf academy began subscribing to *Art International* in 1963, and to *Artforum* and *Art in America* in 1967 (although a few sporadic issues were received before). Palermo thus had regular access to magazines covering American art and could have become familiar with their images if not necessarily with the finer points made by their writers, for the young German reportedly still had difficulty with English at this time.[16]

Original works of art "made in USA" increasingly appeared in German galleries and museums. With Heiner Friedrich and Konrad Fischer as his primary dealers, Palermo would have seen American art in their galleries and met American artists like Bochner in person. It is hard to overestimate the importance of Fischer and Friedrich in introducing contemporary American art to a German audience; their galleries were the main venues showing young American artists abroad, often giving them their first one-man shows.[17] These artists in turn were attracted to Germany because the exchange rate made the trip relatively inexpensive and allowed them to produce on-site work at a significantly lower cost than in New York.[18] Landmark exhibitions were mounted; the most important were Carl Andre's first one-man exhibition in Europe, which opened Fischer's gallery in 1967, Walter De Maria's legendary Earth Room at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in 1968, and Mel Bochner's *Measurement Rooms*, made for both Friedrich and Fischer in 1969.

Of course other galleries exhibited American art too. A few notable examples are worth citing. Galerie Müller in Stuttgart was committed to promoting American color-field painting as well as German variations of it. Alfred Schmela in 1964 exhibited Robert Morris, whose visit for the opening led to his encounter with Joseph Beuys (which subsequently gave rise to differing speculations about who influenced whom) and to his dance performance with Yvonne Rainer at the Düsseldorf academy that Palermo probably attended. Rolf Ricke, while still in Kassel, showed Ellsworth Kelly in 1965. Rudolf Zwirner opened a one-man exhibition of Dan Flavin the following year in Cologne. Many of these dealers had paid their first visit to New York in October 1963, when they set out to explore the art scene there on a communal "art trip" that lasted twenty days.[19] Galleries also frequently showed postwar American art at the newly founded art fairs in Cologne and Düsseldorf.

Museum acquisitions and traveling exhibitions provided Palermo and his peers with further opportunities for firsthand encounters with American art. The well-documented acquisition history of German art museums with respect to American art reveals that German museums acquired contemporary American art consistently from 1965 on. Leading cities were Krefeld and Cologne, closely followed by Düsseldorf. Museums were inspired and supported in their efforts by individuals who began to collect and lend postwar American art. Among the most significant collectors were Peter Ludwig, who in November 1968 gave the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne an important permanent loan of art largely made in the United States, and Karl Ströher, who, mediated by Friedrich's partner Franz Dahlem, purchased Leon Kraushar's entire pop art collection and sent it on tour to German museums in 1968 and 1969.[20]

Although one-man exhibitions of postwar American artists were still rare in German and European museums during the sixties, there were a few exceptions. Noteworthy are a Morris Louis exhibition in Baden-Baden in 1965 and two Rothko retrospectives: one organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York that traveled to Amsterdam and Basel in 1961 and 1962 and another that was on view in Berlin and Düsseldorf in 1971, a show that Palermo could hardly have missed considering his admiration of Rothko and the amount of time he spent in Düsseldorf during that year. More important, institutions in Germany and neighboring countries hosted a large number of traveling group exhibitions that featured American art: *Art USA Now* (1963), *Signale* (Signals; 1965), *Formen der Farbe* (Forms of Color; 1967), *Kompass III* (Compass 3; 1967), *Art of the Real* (1968), and *Minimal Art* (1969), which was on view in Düsseldorf in January and February. Palermo probably saw it there; we know he saw *Formen der Farbe* and was greatly interested.[21] As has been widely noted, the Documenta exhibitions in Kassel were the most important venues for Germans to see American art. While the first Documenta, in 1955, still showcased prewar European art, subsequent exhibitions focused on American work. Documenta 2 in 1959 became widely known for its stress on Abstract Expressionism; Documenta 4, which Palermo saw, was jokingly renamed "Americana" for its stress on pop art and minimalism (fig. 108).[22] Drawing the attention of the American art world to

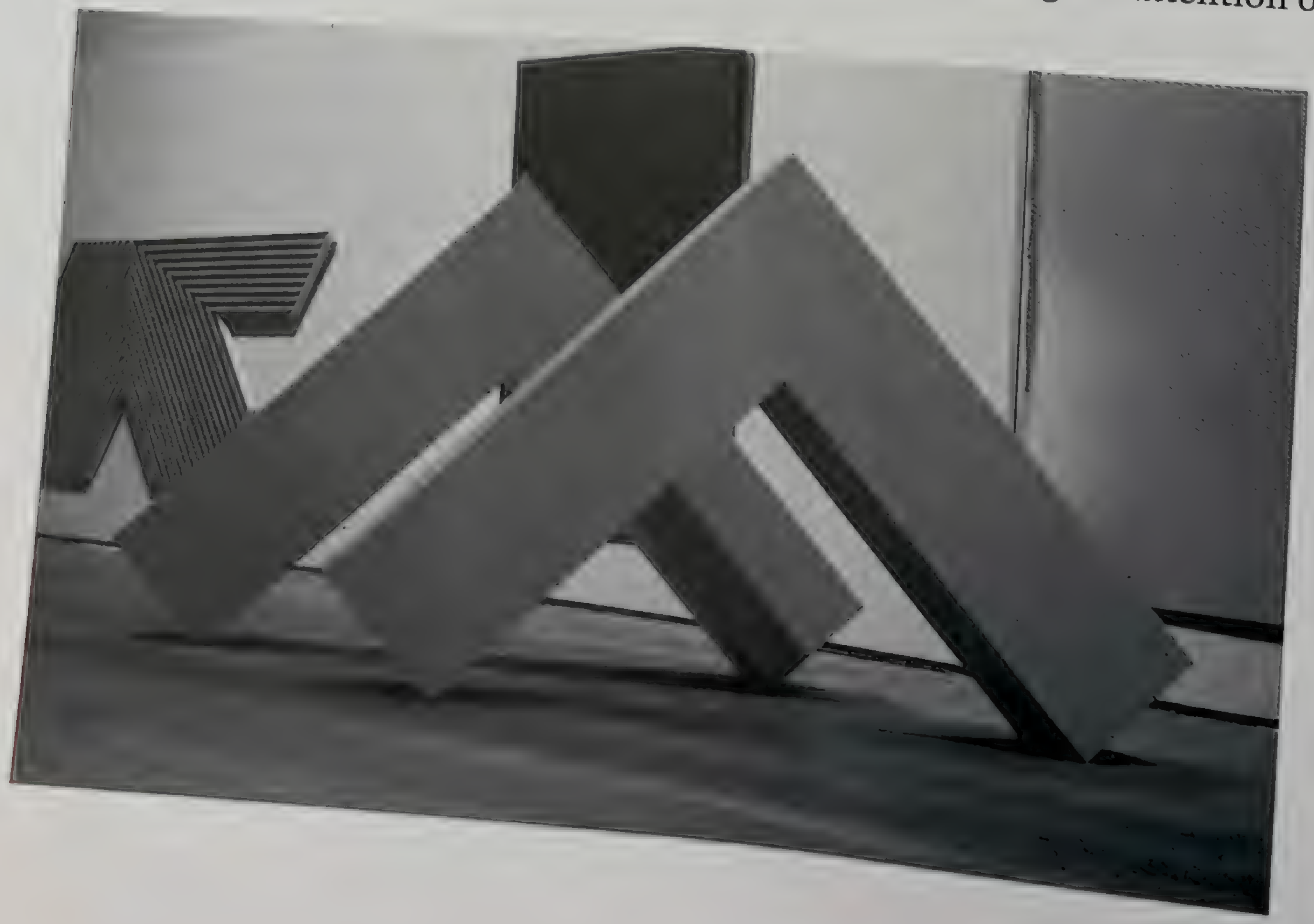


Fig. 108 Robert Morris, *L-Beams*, 1965, as exhibited at Documenta 4, 27 June–6 October 1968. Painted plywood, two units, each 96 x 24 x 24 x 96 x 24 in.

the tremendous surge of American art into Germany, Phyllis Tuchman remarked in a 1970 article in *Artforum*, "It is astonishing to see so much American art in Germany and it is unnerving to see New York art there before it is displayed in New York. Much of the art is so well chosen that the pleasure of experiencing art is even more rewarding than in New York. To see work by contemporary masters, it is not necessary to have access to a private collector's home . . . visit an art gallery." Tuchman went so far as to conclude that "American art—whether we recognize it or not—is now to be seen in museums in Germany."[23]

If the strong presence of American art in Germany began to make Americans feel uneasy, it had long caused skepticism and even anger among many German artists and critics. American art was enthusiastically embraced by most German dealers, collectors, and curators, as well as by a general art audience. American pop, the large scale and intense colors of color-field painting, and the large scale and industrial materials of minimal art catered to German viewers who sought confirmation and representation of their newfound standards of living courtesy of the economic miracle. In addition the embrace of a non-German art—it happened to be American—conveniently avoided a confrontation with the national (and National Socialist) legacy of art in Germany and thus functioned in much the same way that abstract art had in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Thanks to this popularity, American art proved to be marketable and profitable, certainly for German dealers but also for many less obvious venders, such as airlines and art magazines, who advertised and organized "art trips" to the United States from 1965 on.[24] Most German artists, by contrast, complained about the emphasis on America, feeling competitive or envious that their work seemed to be ignored; many wrote angry memos and defensive manifestoes. "German artists reacted gruffly," we learn from a contemporary critic, to the favoritism shown toward Americans at Documenta 4, where fifty-seven of the artists represented came from the United States and only eighteen were from Germany.[25]

EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN METAL

Palermo was one of only a handful of German artists of the 1960s who spent a considerable part of their careers in the United States. (Others included Hans Haacke, who went to Temple University on a Fulbright scholarship in 1961 and eventually moved to New York permanently; and Hanne Darboven and Franz Erhard Walther, who lived and worked in New York from 1965 to 1969 and from 1967 to 1973, respectively.) Palermo paid two visits to the United States before moving to New York in December 1973. Gerhard Richter accompanied him on his first trip in November 1970, a ten-day stay in New York that led to several collaborations between the two friends on their return to Düsseldorf. It seems likely that the two saw the full range of exhibitions up during their stay, including those of Carl Andre at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Mark Rothko at Marlborough Gallery, Robert Mangold at Fischbach, Kenneth Noland at André Emmerich, and Brice Marden at Bykert. They also showed photographs of their work to American artists they had met back home like Robert Ryman and James Rosenquist.[26] Shortly after their return, Konrad Fischer remarked that "Palermo and Richter . . . have now been to New York, and they felt at home there because they had already met artists like Andre and LeWitt over here."[27] While the two did not exactly feel "at home," Palermo nevertheless returned to the United States in April 1973 with his second wife, Kristin. Using money he had been awarded for the Kunstpreis Berlin (Berlin Art Prize), given by the Akademie der Künste on behalf of the Berlin Senate to honor outstanding achievement in the arts, they traveled throughout the country for three weeks, stopping in Chicago, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles, where they stayed with John Knight and visited Michael Asher. Their first and last stop was New York, where Palermo again visited Ryman's studio.[28]

Shortly before Christmas in 1973, Palermo moved to New York for good. He was determined to go: he left his wife behind, reportedly turned down the offer of a teaching position at the Kunstakademie

Hamburg, and worked to overcome his initial difficulties with English.[29] The move was facilitated, perhaps even encouraged by, the recent opening of Heiner Friedrich's gallery branch in SoHo on 141 Wooster Street—in fact, Palermo first moved into a space in the same building, which Friedrich routinely offered to artists he had invited to New York.[30] (In 1977 it was converted to permanently house a new version of Walter De Maria's *Earth Room* first made in Munich.) But it appears that Palermo was driven by a desire for something new. Asked later what drew him to New York, an old high school friend remembered that Palermo "answered laconically, 'At least I experience something there. They have something to tell.'" Likewise Thordis Moeller recalled Palermo drawing an analogy between his initial desire to move to New York and his later interest in visiting South Asia "to experience something different." He wanted to "go to Calcutta because he expected it to be similar to what had excited him about New York City: the heat, the people, and the colors."[31]

Perhaps Palermo hoped that the move to New York would have a productive impact on his art. He had gradually reached an impasse in his work, and his output had slowed dramatically for at least two years before his departure. In 1971 Palermo was occupied mainly with wall paintings and made little else. The following year, however, he worked on only three wall projects and six other works; in 1973, he made only two wall projects and ten other works. By 1971 he was seeking a way to move beyond the cloth pictures he had made so confidently for more than five years, and he experimented with different compositions and industrial materials other than fabric: he made a cloth picture with a vertical division, a horizontally divided black painting using adhesive foil (fig. 109), and an object that consisted of a field of white Formica divided by a horizontal strip of black tape.[32] In October 1972 Palermo had exhibited his last cloth picture, *Triptychon*, at the Cologne art fair. In addition, his last wall painting at the Hamburger Kunstverein in March 1973 had received especially dismissive reviews in the German press.[33]

In 1972 and 1973, as he had done many times before, Palermo returned to the types of T-shaped objects and two-part objects he had first made in 1966, another indicator that he felt stuck.[34] Crises often lead to new beginnings though, and the two objects Palermo made after arriving in New York radically departed from the materials of his earlier objects by incorporating metal. As recent technical analysis by Pia Gottschaller revealed, *White Wing* reused a found street sign and became Palermo's first work made from aluminum (see fig. 28).[35] From this point on, metal became the painter's new material of choice. After eight years of staying with clearly defined objects, cloth pictures, and wall paintings, Palermo now searched for a new way of working and gradually moved toward what would become his last body of work.[36]

That said, the impact of *White Wing* should not be overstated. Palermo's experiments in metal date back to his time in Germany and were a direct if slightly unusual development of his last two wall paintings—the Documenta 5 work of 1972 and the Hamburg wall painting of 1973 (see figs. 78 and 106). For these works Palermo had notably chosen two different-colored rust-protective undercoatings. Whereas he was able to use the orange Bleimennige in Kassel, he was forced to substitute ordinary wall paint in Hamburg after the installation crew refused to work in the enclosed interior because of the fumes generated by the reddish-brown undercoating Palermo had selected for his last wall painting.[37] Palermo also used gray rust-preventive undercoating to cover the surface of an object incorporating a spirit level dated 1969–73, and the orange Bleimennige for an odd, rather unsuccessful—if in this context nevertheless important—work dating from 1973. After Palermo had applied this type of paint to canvas, wood, and wall surfaces, the decision to use it on its proper surface was inevitable, and he did just that in a set of three monochromes.[38]

The works in question date from around 1972–73

Fig. 109 Untitled (WVZ 146), 1971. Black formica and black adhesive foil, 72.3 x 65 x 2 cm. Private collection.

and are made of thin (0.15 centimeters) steel plates a square meter in size. Each is covered with a rust-protective undercoating of a different color: one is painted brown-red, the same color as the Hamburg wall-painting; another orange, the color of the Documenta wall-painting; and the third light gray (fig. 110). Based on recent technical analysis that reveals several layers of different-colored paints, Gottschaller suggested that Palermo initially used the panels to test "how the paints expanded and seized a space before he decided to use them on much larger scales" for wall works such as his Documenta 5 and Hamburg wall paintings.[39] Yet these first three metal pictures also seem to elaborate on and closely relate to his cloth pictures on both a visual and a conceptual level. They are straightforward, square in shape, and, most important, medium-specific: the paint is intimately and technically related to the ground; the works are entirely flat yet their objecthood is stressed by their installation slightly away from the wall; and there are no divisions within their even, monochrome surfaces.[40] Despite this self-evident development, the three works did not immediately open up new possibilities. Schwenk speculates that the steel was too heavy to work with and too expensive. More important, working in monochrome probably only blocked Palermo further, as it had so many modern artists before him. It was at approximately this point that Palermo determined on his move to New York, and it appears that he was fleeing from this impasse and hoped to be stimulated by the city with which he had fallen in love on his two previous visits.[41]

But initially the situation grew worse after he relocated to the United States. He produced no work until the following fall, and his crisis lasted for almost a year longer, as conveyed by a later girlfriend, Robin Bruch, and as documented in his sketchbook from that period. His father's death on 6 May 1974 fell during this already difficult period.[42] Helen Winkler, who worked at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in New York and befriended Palermo soon after his arrival there, recalled: "Palermo installed a large number of untreated aluminum plates on walls during the summer of 1974. The result was extremely unsatisfying to Palermo, who was in a critical state anyway both personally and artistically."[43] Then in the fall Palermo suddenly stumbled on what would turn out to be his last comprehensive, if relatively small, body of work, the Metallbilder: he made *Times of the Day I* (fig. 111).

We can only imagine Palermo's relief and exhilaration after years of crisis, and his eagerness to stay in New York is documented in his application for an extension of his visa filed a year into his stay, soon after he had made the first metal pictures. "During the past two years, I have made several visits to the United States to examine the art being made here, to talk and exchange ideas with American artists, and, recently, to create new art works. The Leverkusen Museum exhibition [which was coming up the following month] is of works created by me in Germany. The paintings and drawings I am making in the United States are different from the kind of art I make in Germany. I use different materials and media and I find my work influenced by the country I am in. I wish to continue the pattern of residing in Germany and making visits to the United States because I feel that it helps me to develop new ideas as an artist and it improves the quality of all the artwork I make."[44] Although we must view Palermo's rationale and phrasing with some skepticism considering its official context and his strong desire to stay in New York, it is nevertheless significant that his main reason for wanting to do so was the positive effect his new environment was having on his work.

Like the cloth pictures, most of Palermo's roughly thirty metal pictures are remarkably consistent, with the exception of a series of six diptychs dating from 1975 and 1976, whose limited number and in some cases unfinished state make it difficult to determine where exactly Palermo was heading with them.[45] Most of the metal pictures include four rectangular metal planes arranged horizontally along the wall at even, fairly large intervals. Two basic models differ only in size. The series *Times of the Day*,

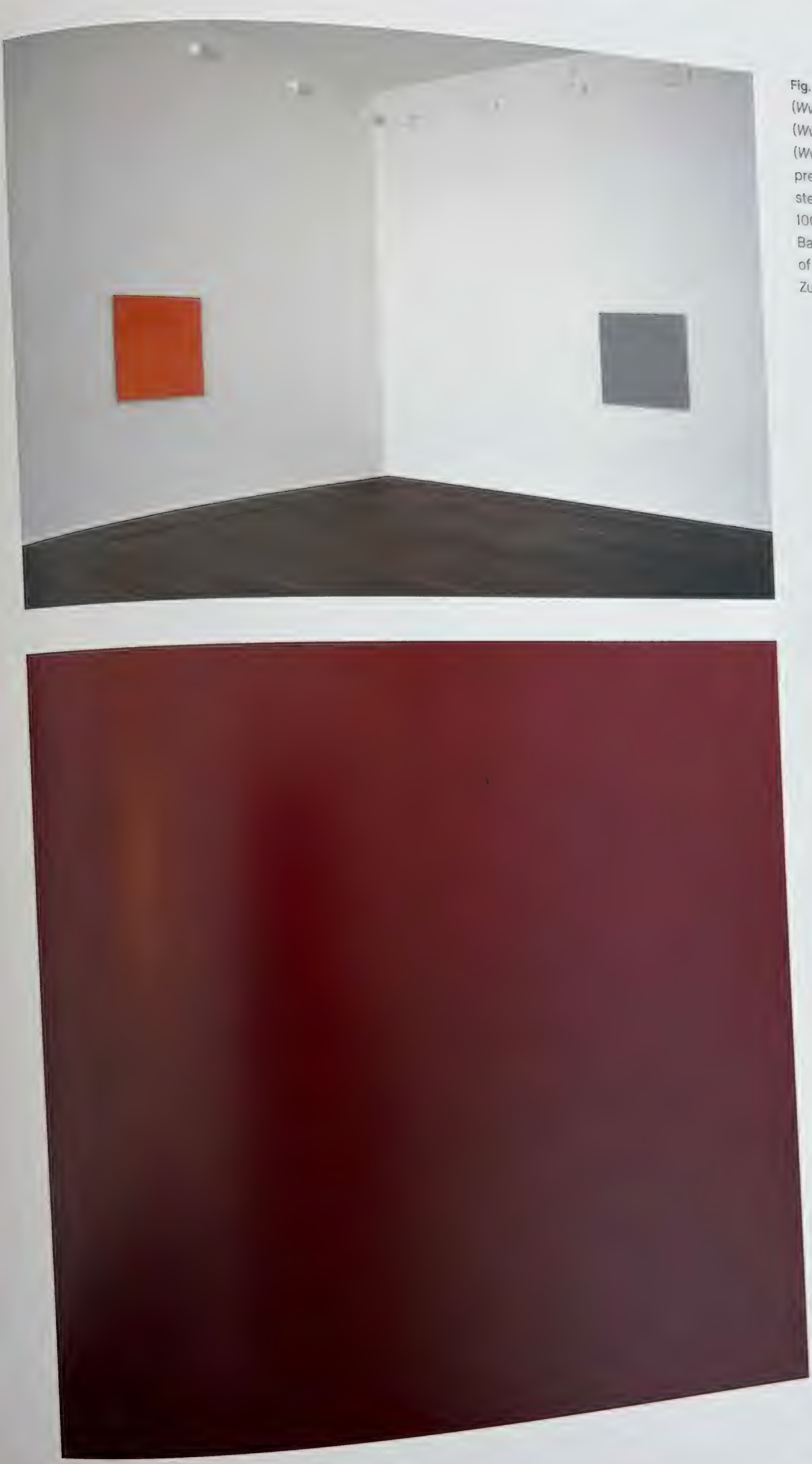


Fig. 110 Top left: *Untitled* (*Wvz* 169); top right: *Untitled* (*Wvz* 168); bottom: *Untitled* (*Wvz* 167); all 1973. Rust-preventive undercoating on steel panels, each 100 x 100 x 0.15 cm. Collection of Barbara Nüsse; Collection of Galerie Zwirner & Wirth, Zurich; and private collection

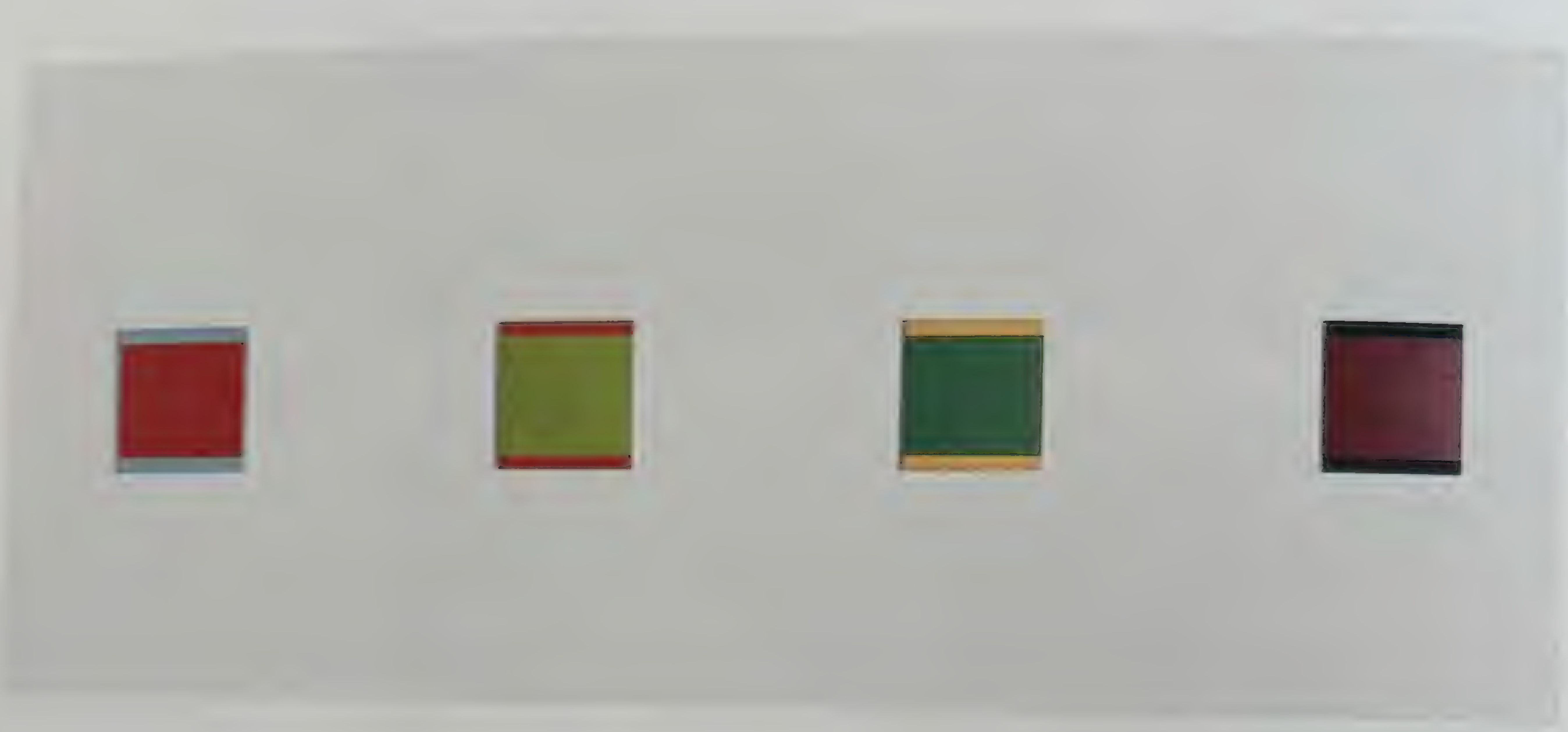


Fig. 111 *Times of the Day I* (*Wvz* 174), 1974–75. Acrylic on aluminum, four panels, each 56.8 x 52 x 0.2 cm, distance from wall, 1.5 cm. Dia Art Foundation, New York.

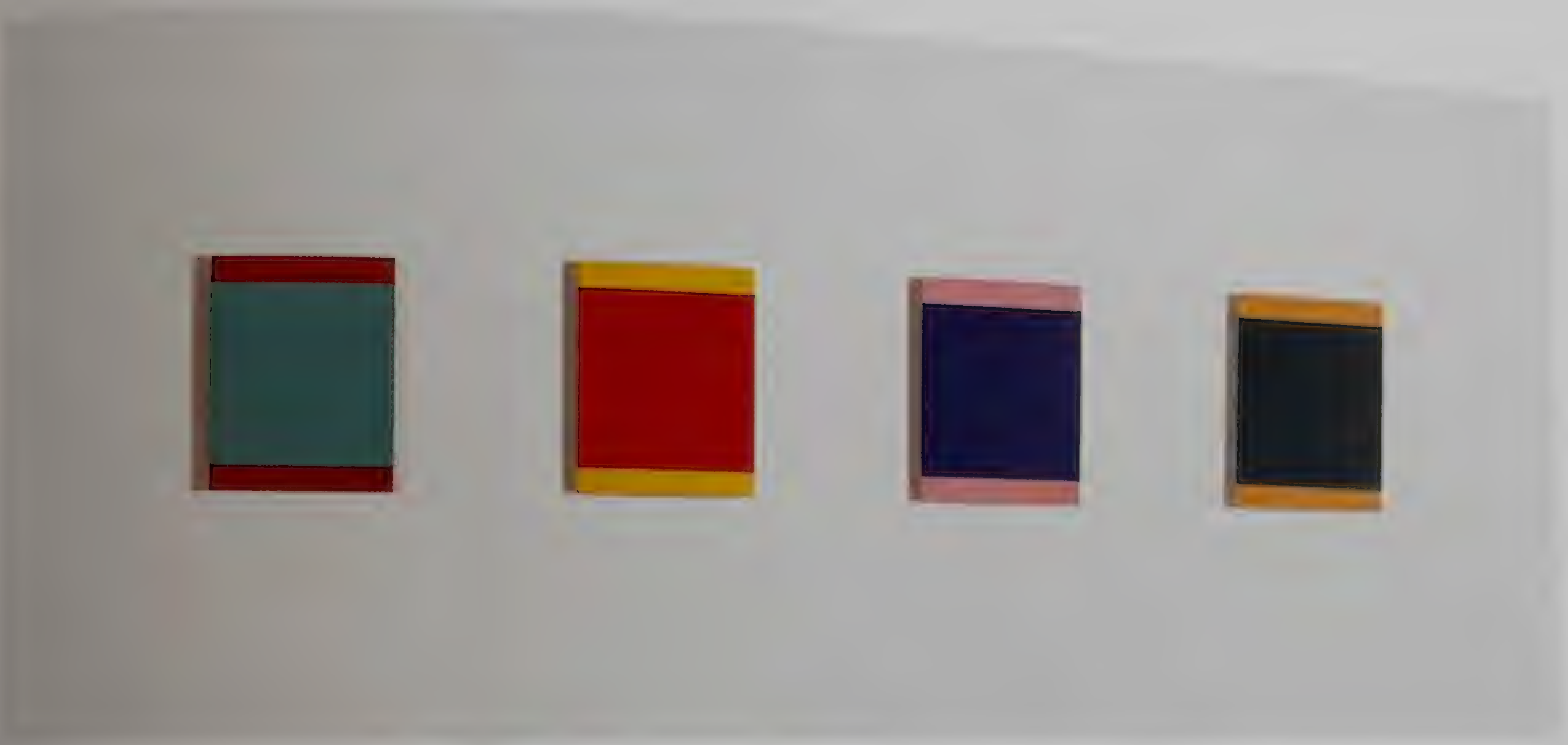


Fig. 112 *Coney Island II* (*Wvz* 179), 1975. Acrylic on aluminum, four panels, each 26.7 x 21 x 0.2 cm, distance from wall, 1.6 cm. Private collection.

beginning with Palermo's first metal picture, *Times of the Day I*, in the fall of 1974 and ending with *Times of the Day VI* in 1976, consists of six individual works of four elements, each measuring about 57 by 52 centimeters and arranged at 104-centimeter intervals.[46] By contrast, the works in the two-part series *Coney Island* and all but one of the other metal pictures are significantly smaller. Each is made of four elements measuring only about 27 by 21 centimeters and placed at 21-centimeter intervals (fig. 112). Two of the metal pictures include only three members, *Weiss, Rot, Schwarz (für Heiner Friedrich)* (White, Red, Black [for Heiner Friedrich]) and *Schwarz, Rot, Weiss* (Black, Red, White; both 1975).[47] In all cases, Palermo mounted the pictures on small wood or metal frames that are invisible when installed but allow the pictures to hang at a distance from the wall, as if floating, usually about 1.5 centimeters away. These metal planes are painted in acrylic, and the color is applied evenly if with fairly visible brushstrokes.[48] In each rectangular member, horizontal bands of the same width and color frame a different-colored central field at its top and bottom edges. The works always appear intensely colorful, regardless of whether colors are repeated among the four members. Different-colored pentimenti are often visible at the boundaries between bands and field and at the edges of the metal planes; sometimes the metal ground is visible on these edges as well.[49]

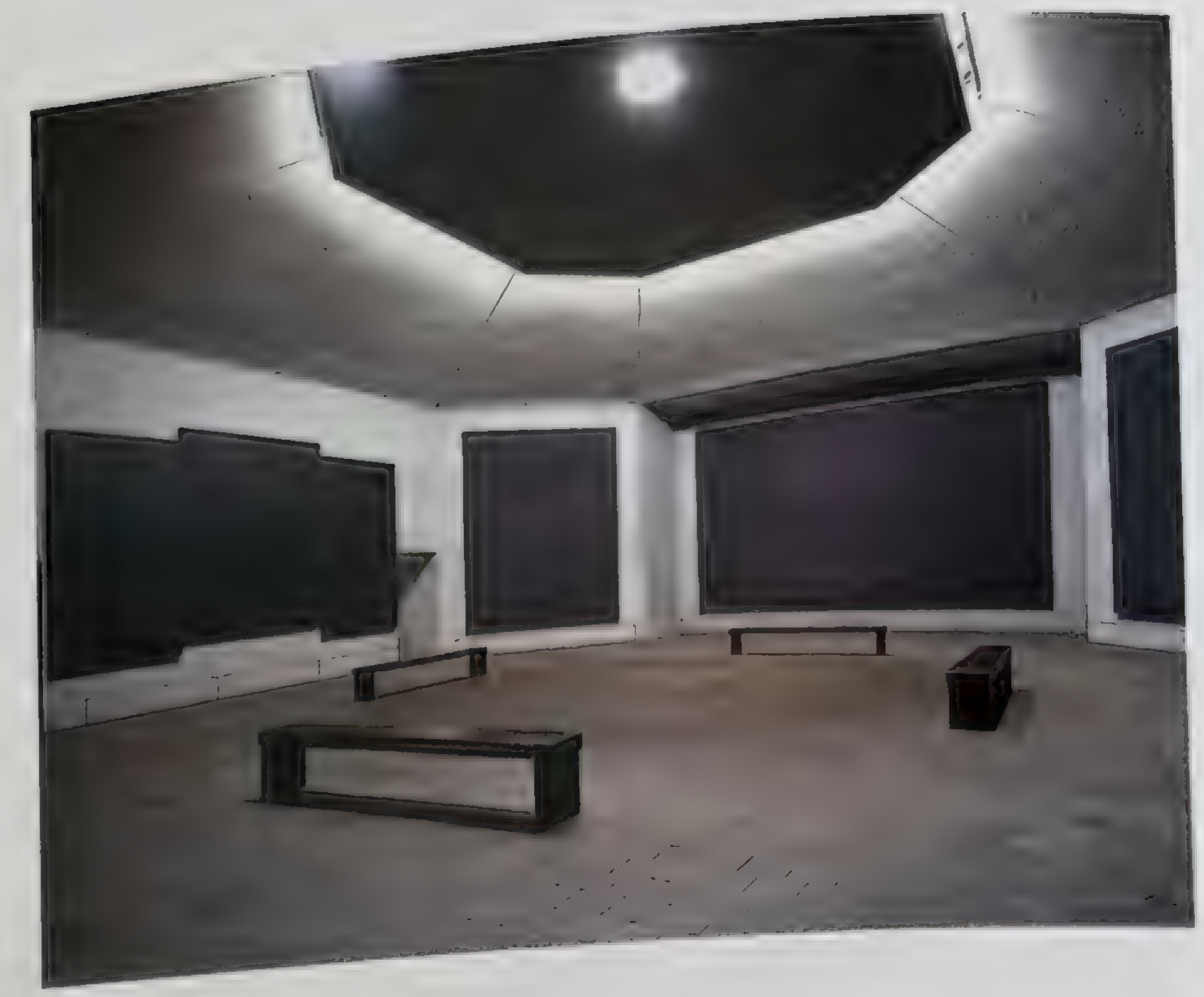


Fig. 113 The Rothko Chapel, interior view with the west triptych, northwest and north triptych wall paintings by Mark Rothko, Houston, Texas, 1971. Paintings: dry pigments, rabbit-skin glue, egg/oil emulsion, and synthetic polymer on canvas; chapel: octagonal, 602½ x 674½ in.

THE IMAGE OF THE METAL PICTURES

The sudden turnaround in the fall of 1974 was probably inspired at least in part by a trip Palermo had taken in July with Imi Knoebel to see, among other things, the Rothko Chapel in Houston, in which they spent a full day (fig. 113). "Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman were our heroes," Knoebel told Gottschaller in discussing that visit.[50] Yet if we look back to the trio of monochrome metal pictures from the perspective of the fall breakthrough, we see that the seeds for this new work were all there already: the application of paint to a series of metal surfaces installed slightly away from the wall. It took Palermo almost two years to realize and tap into the possibilities he had opened up in the three monochrome steel works by applying paint to metal surfaces and treating them as a pictorial support. Why this long period of contemplation to take a seemingly simple step? It appears that the step required a more intimate knowledge of American art, one he probably gained only after spending considerable time inside the New York art world.

In a letter to Evelyn Weiss, curator of the 1975 Bienal de São Paulo, Palermo connected these apparently different works—the steel monochromes and the serial metal pictures—through their common grounds. "If I were to work with canvas and stretcher, the whole image of the pictures would be a completely different one. I painted the first pictures on metal plates around 1972, and it turned out that I could realize my ideas at this time very well with these supports." Palermo added, "Instead of aluminum I could just as well paint on copper or steel."[51] The original German phrasing here is peculiar (and is even more awkward in English translation)—and it is telling. Palermo did not write that the *pictures*, that is the *Bilder*, would be different if made of materials other than metal, but that the "image" of the pictures, *das Image der Bilder*, would be different. Palermo, it seems, was concerned here less with the way the application of paint on metal may have looked than with the public perception of his use of metal—with the baggage, as it were, that came along with the material. This is certainly underscored by his indifference to the choice of a particular metal: all that mattered was that it was metal. But what was that "image" of metal?

In the early 1970s, in both Germany and New York, the image of metal was determined by its prevalent use in American minimalist objects. Metal meant minimalism, and the material was largely responsible for the industrial connotations so often given to the work of minimalist artists.[52] Palermo's metal pictures make several other important references to minimalism, references that are perhaps more prominent than the metal grounds, which can be seen only from up close on the panels' edges and are mainly intuited from the thin yet stiff and solid appearance of the planes. The serial structure of the metal pictures is the most prominent allusion to minimalism. Each of these works is based on a series of four members (with the exception of two series of three) that share the same measurements and the same band and field structure. The relatively wide intervals, the horizontal bands, and the works' horizontal hanging further stress the seriality by optically stretching the metal pictures horizontally. Although they come to full fruition only in the circular installations of *to the people of N.Y.C.*, in a large space, the four-part metal pictures, like Palermo's earlier small objects, also activate actual space by punctuating the large white wall and making the negative space between panels an active part of the work: another characteristic that recalls much minimalist sculpture. Moreover, the works take on the large scale typical of minimalist work by commanding relatively large spaces within and around themselves. As with minimalist objects, viewers of the metal pictures become active participants as they look along panels in search of an underlying system. That *intuition* of a system was crucial to Donald Judd, who insisted that it was actually more important than any recognition of the real underlying system. Although Palermo's metal pictures are not minimalist as defined by American critics and artists during the sixties, they do incorporate central minimalist features.

The metal pictures promote another image, that of color-field painting. One reference is the presentation of the painting as an object that comes from mounting the metal ground at a distance from the wall. In addition, the colors in the metal pictures are even and unmodulated, intense and radiant, much like the paintings that first inspired the name "color-field painting." Evelyn Weiss has compared Palermo's metal pictures to certain seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings done on a copper ground, which gives the colors a peculiar intensity because no surface texture interferes with the texture of the colors.[53] But Palermo's colors do not radiate as a result of their aluminum grounds. Not only is the acrylic paint opaque by nature; it is too thickly applied to interact visually with the ground. Unlike the cloth pictures, where we saw Palermo pushing American color-field painting to its ultimate "marketable" conclusion, the metal pictures' references to color field are less consistent, more selective and open ended.

In addition, Palermo chose very specific colors and very specific combinations for his metal pictures, unusual colors that often pushed the limits of the systematic color nomenclature sought by Enlightenment figures like the French chemist Antoine Lavoisier.[54] Note a light blue whose extreme radiance does not quite permit the analogy implied by "sky blue" and a deep plum in *Times of the Day I* (see fig. 111), for example; a green mixed with a little white but not enough to call it mint and a dirty pink in *Coney Island II* (see fig. 112); and a set of colors mixed with white and gray in an untitled painting of 1975 that are comparable only to the muted and tired appearance of office furniture colors and the colors of Robert Mangold's early paintings (fig. 114). In his sketches for these works, Palermo did write out the names of the colors he was planning to use for the final works—for one thing, a written word was easier to change than an actual, sketched-in color field, as Gottschaller convincingly argues—but he needed no less than fourteen notations to capture the different reds he was using and twelve for his blues, to cite the two most extreme examples, and he often added other descriptive terms.[55]

Palermo's combinations of colors are dazzling. To enhance his color intensity he certainly relied on standard combinations like complementary color pairings of red and green or blue and orange. But the color combinations that go beyond such basic ideas are central to the works. Consider again *Times of the Day I*. A luminous red field causes its adjacent light blue bands to glow; black bands give extraordinary depth to the plum center they frame; and two greens, because they are so similar and yet so different, stage a dramatic competition for brightness that remains unresolved. *Coney Island II* is spectacular, with its unusual and surprising color combinations. The deep, not-quite-mint green is bordered by a dirty red, a clear and clean red by a warm yellow, a deep violet by a dirty pink, and a serene black by a giddy orange. Even more unusual, the effect of surprise persists as we look for an extended period of time. We never get used to the color sequence. We also find simultaneous color contrasts that play tricks with our eyes, primarily as Palermo uses the horizontal bands to manipulate optically the size and shape of the fields in between. This is particularly apparent in the juxtaposition of the two bright green fields in *Times of the Day I*, where the right field appears slightly smaller than its neighbor because it is slightly darker, or in the two central red fields in *Times of the Day IV* (fig. 115), where the white and black bands not only cause the left field to appear darker and the right to appear lighter but also make the left appear horizontally and the right appear vertically stretched out.

The images of the metal pictures go beyond paradigms of minimalism and color-field painting, for the works also adopt certain aspects of Rothko's paintings. The metal pictures generally echo the serial arrangement of the paintings in the Rothko Chapel, and the far right panel in *Times of the Day I* more specifically alludes to the signature plum color in Rothko's Chapel paintings. There are more subtle references as well. Analogous to the chalky paint quality in the chapel and other Rothko paintings, the colors in Palermo's metal pictures radiate precisely because of the fairly matte, sometimes even dull paint surface, for any shine would create reflections that would obscure the colors in certain areas from certain angles. Although the horizontal bands along the top and bottom edges of the metal planes recall Rothko's horizontal bands created by the reserve space around the central rectangular fields, these were probably also inspired by Barnett Newman's 1951 painting *Day Before One*, whose title Palermo echoes in the *Times of the Day* series and whose

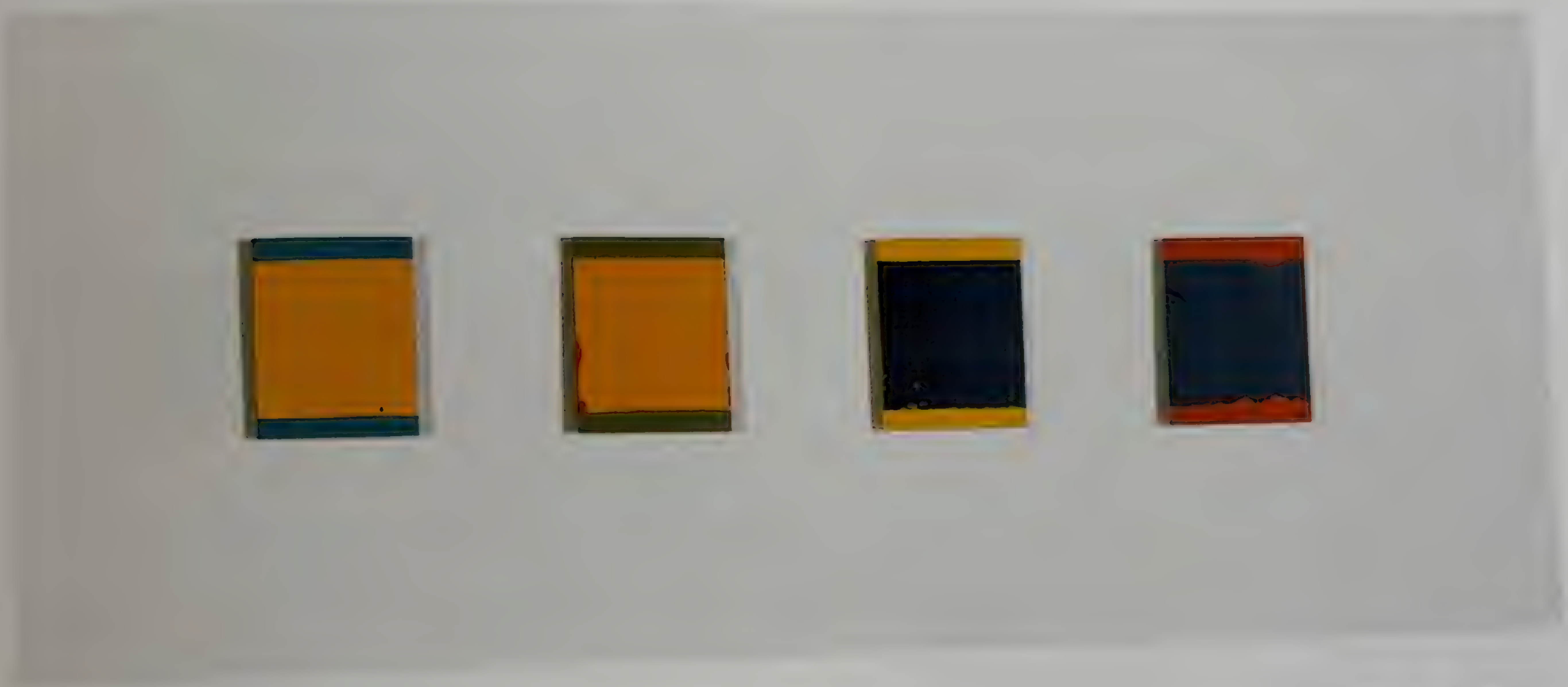


Fig. 114 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 176), 1975. Acrylic and cardboard on aluminum, four panels, each 26.7 x 21 x 0.3 cm, distance from wall, 1.6 cm. Flick collection.

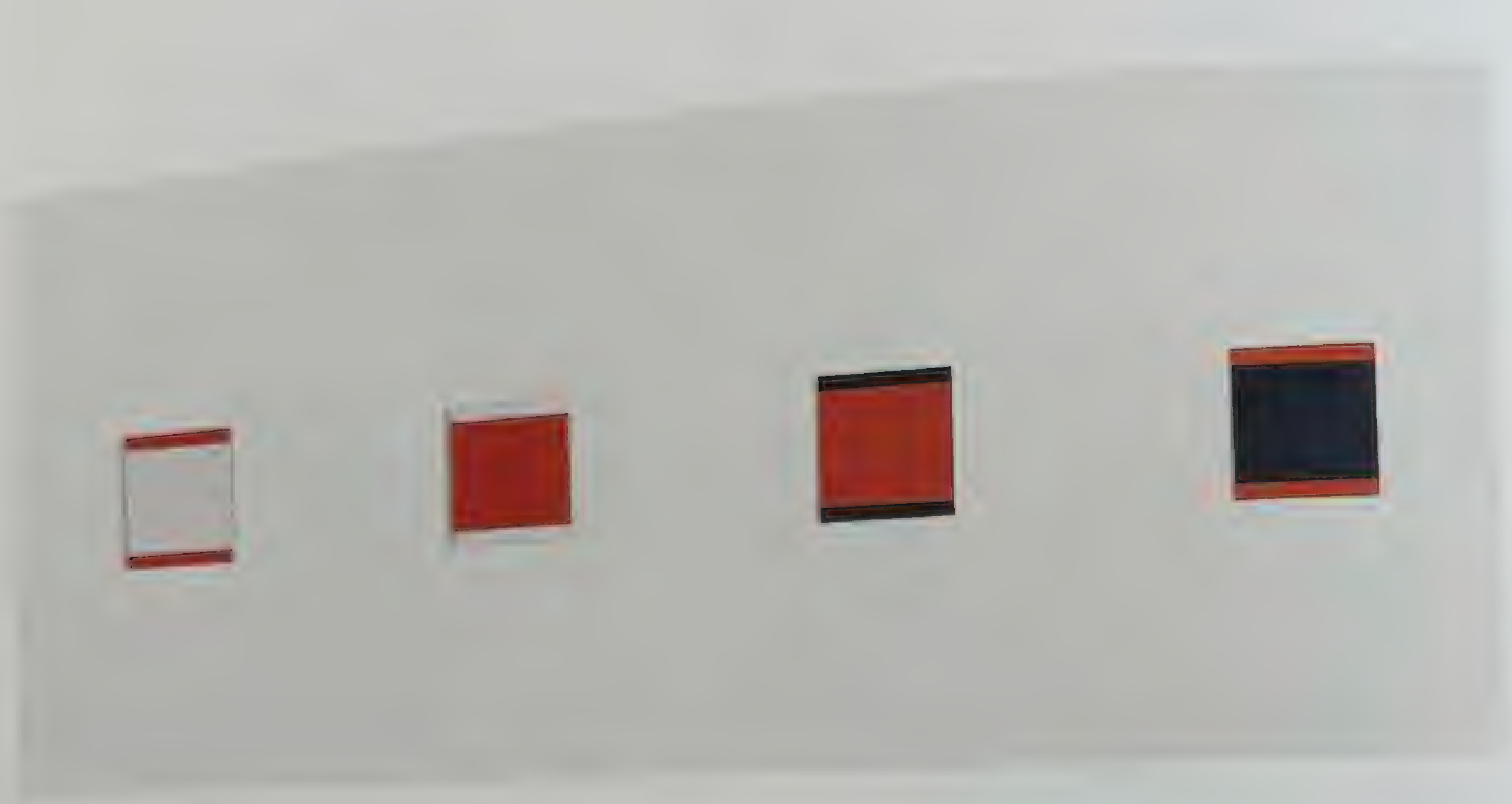


Fig. 115 *Times of the Day IV* (*Wvz* 188), 1976. Acrylic on aluminum, four panels, each 56.8 x 52 x 0.2 cm, distance from wall, 1.7 cm. Private collection.

unusual composition must have struck him when he saw it at the Kunstmuseum Basel in the late sixties or early seventies (fig. 116).[56] The most important parallel between Palermo's work and Rothko's is the phenomenon of hovering color planes. As has been widely noted by viewers of Rothko's paintings, the color fields seem to float above their grounds, a result of the subtle modulation of his colors, the blurred edges of the fields, and the occasional addition of a lighter tone near these edges. In the installation of Palermo's metal planes away from the wall, this hovering is literalized.[57]

Palermo's metal pictures pick up on central features of minimalism, color-field painting, and Rothko's work. This is their "image," the analogies and the context they present for everyone to see instantly, as many critics and viewers did. But surely this is not all they are: the metal pictures are not minimalist sculptures, they are not color-field paintings, they do not really resemble Rothko's paintings; they are, in sum, far from sharing the underlying structures and effects of the American art they reference. As we have seen, the metal in Palermo's metal pictures is barely visible. The works command a large space, but they do so by means of extremely small objects, unlike the commonly large structures of minimalist sculpture. They indulge in colors that the minimalists—with the exception of Donald Judd and Dan Flavin—shied away from and rejected as decorative. The paint application in the metal pictures lacks the identity of color and material advocated by Judd and Carl Andre; it is blatantly applied and sits on top of the metal surface, rather than being inherent in the material as is the case in Judd's Plexiglas and enamel finishes and Andre's blue steel and red copper. Although we cannot call the color in Palermo's metal pictures relational—a quality Judd rejected in European art—its distribution nevertheless lacks a precise system and would have been regarded as arbitrary by someone like Judd. Further, unlike minimalism, Palermo's metal pictures are not concerned with the changing viewpoints of simple geometric structures in space and time that

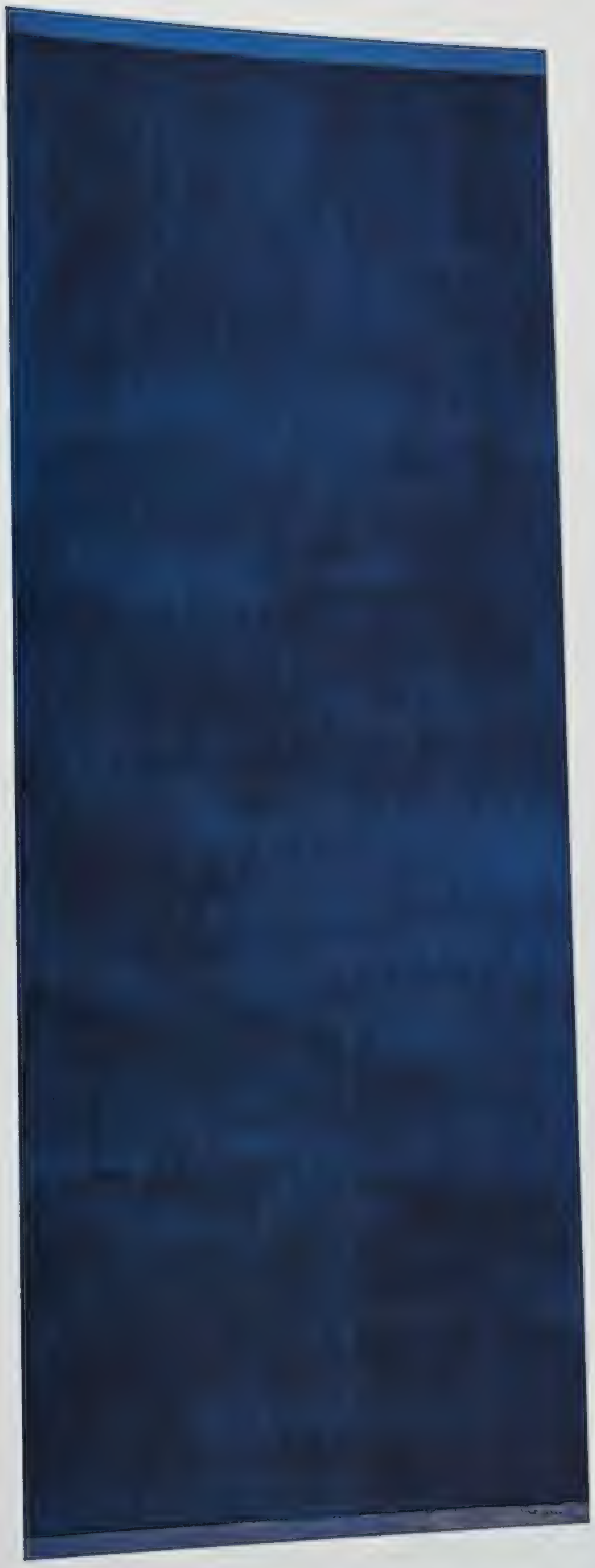


Fig. 116 Barnett Newman, *Day Before One*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 132 x 50 in. Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum Basel.

American artists and critics locate at the heart of minimalism.[58] Neither are Palermo's metal pictures truly in the spirit of color-field painting, most importantly because of their thick paint application, which appears clumsy next to the elegance of the impeccably smooth and even color surfaces of Kenneth Noland or Ellsworth Kelly (who was arguably not a color-field painter but was received as one in both Germany and the United States). With respect to Rothko, Schwenk rightly distinguishes between that artist's interest in a transcendental experience and Palermo's secular version. That difference is demonstrated with almost pedagogical clarity in Palermo's transformation of Rothko's ethereal illusion of hovering color planes into literally floating painted metal planes in front of the wall.

Isolated instances of the characteristics the metal pictures share with minimalism, color-field painting, and the work of Rothko had already appeared in Palermo's earlier work: the painting as object in his so-called objects, for example; the engagement of the viewer in actual space and on a large scale in the wall paintings; or the use of intense colors and occasionally even a serial structure in the cloth pictures. Such references join and multiply in the metal pictures. Like the metal pictures, however, the objects, cloth pictures, and wall paintings never quite fit the "American" mold, whether because they work through a specifically German legacy of abstraction, because they lack a sense of perfection in their making and surfaces, or because they engage with their historical circumstances, such as the growing art market and the debates about art and politics. What, then, was Palermo's relation to American art?

In Palermo's work references to American art occur as isolated, often stylistic instances. These features never signify the systems of meaning associated with minimalism or color-field painting—the phenomenological underpinnings of most minimalist sculpture, the essentialist discourse surrounding color-field painting, the transcendentalism attached to Rothko's paintings. In Germany there was little place for and little understanding of the more complex aspects of this art as discussed by artists and critics in American journals published in English at the time. Instead, the German art world simply coded many of the features that appear in the metal pictures "American." The "images" of minimalism, color fields, and Mark Rothko were ultimately national ones. Repetition and seriality, for example, were termed Americanisms; the use of wide space was held to be typical of the experience of the American landscape; large scale was considered uniquely American in origin because of the large loft spaces that New York–based artists were converting into studios and that were impossible to find in German cities; pure color was the image of the American dream; and the viewer's self-awareness was regarded as a subject of American art more generally.[59] As such, isolated uses of Americanisms by German artists were loaded with their conflicting attitudes toward the influx of American art into Germany. With the metal pictures, however, Palermo shifts from being simply subject to these conditions, as seen in the sporadic references to American art in his earlier work groups, to creating an overdetermined articulation of, and hence active engagement with, American art. Two unproductive years and a move across the Atlantic may have provided just the distance necessary to transform his naive love of American art into a bold recognition and creative use of his own German misunderstandings of it.[60]

SYSTEMS AT PLAY

The viewers' impulse to scan the panels in search of an underlying system contributed to the minimalist image of the metal pictures. That effort remains essentially unsuccessful and complicates further Palermo's relation with American art and, by implication, the European and specifically German art world's relation to American art. We are invited to look for some kind of rationale in Palermo's metal pictures by the strict seriality of their evenly sized, evenly spaced, and evenly divided panels combined with their repetitions of and shifts in color. The traces of Palermo's overpainting, barely visible in reproductions but prominent when one is looking at the originals, also suggest intentional, carefully tested and thought-out color choices. The appearance of a methodical arrangement is strongest in a group of metal pictures that is restricted to what we intuitively understand to be basic color sets. Palermo uses only primary colors in *Red, Yellow, and Blue* (fig. 117) and *Times of the Day VI;* he restricts himself to other seemingly essential color sets in the complementary works *Weiss, Rot, Schwarz (für Heiner Friedrich)* and *Schwarz, Rot, Weiss.*[61]

Let us pursue for a moment some of these suggestions of a system. In *Red, Yellow, and Blue,* we focus first on the pair of yellow panels because of the Western instinct to read from left to right and because of the repetition of that bright color, which is contrasted with a red and a blue panel to the right. Seeking to understand the difference between the left and right halves, we note the symmetry of the bands; blue bands frame the central panels and red the outer panels. Yet that observation seems unrelated to the initial problem. We may then wonder about the number of times each color occurs—yellow twice, red and blue three times each. We are forced to start over again in our search, not once, but constantly. While the appearance of a system may be stronger in the metal pictures that are based on basic color sets, the desire to find such a system is stronger for those that use both a greater number of colors and more unusual colors. Although *Coney Island II* captivates with its intense colors and strange color combinations, it also appears to promise closure after its color arrangement is categorized and understood. And so we move our eyes from one color pairing to another, back and forth, establishing and tracking temporary but ultimately unhelpful categories such as light and dark, mute and radiant, saturated and whitened, complementary and noncomplementary. Our efforts are complicated further by the even weight of the four panels, for it causes our eyes to jump from one to another, making it difficult to settle on any one panel for more than a few seconds. Information about the source of the colors—Palermo took them from wooden huts he had seen on Coney Island—does not help much; neither does a consideration of the other member of the series dating from the same year, *Coney Island I,* whose pastel palette is slightly less intriguing but equally impenetrable.[62]

It is as though Palermo would not allow a resting eye or a satisfied mind. He labored to prevent any sense of completion, continually changing his colors in the process of working on the pictures. In a letter to Evelyn Weiss he explained that his working process and color choices were intuitive. "The aluminum panels are painted with acrylic paint over a white ground. Most of the times many layers of colors are superimposed, since the original concept often changes during the painting process and since the final picture often consists of a color sequence or a color effect [*Farbklang*], which I could not invent nor imagine when I began the work."[63] In *The Return* (fig. 118), Palermo changed many of the colors several times, as we can detect from the paint layers underneath, visible primarily on the sides and in recent technical analysis: the left panel has a lighter green underneath, the next panel a little bit of red under the yellow band, the third panel a light blue and a bright red, and the far right panel a green, yellow, and light orange.[64] While all metal pictures show pentimenti, this is an extreme case, and it may be that Palermo was trying something new here. Indeed, *The Return* is the only metal picture where the horizontal bands in a single panel have different colors: the black panel has a yellow top and a red bottom band, although the other three—a green panel with red bands, a purple-blue panel with orange bands, and an orange-red panel with blue bands—all have matching bands. Making the bands unmatching was perhaps an obvious choice if Palermo was trying to make the system as complicated as possible, but it was the wrong one if he was trying to maintain the appearance of a system. If Palermo had pushed this idea further, having none of the bands match, no system would be suggested in the first place. This is why I believe that *The Return* remained

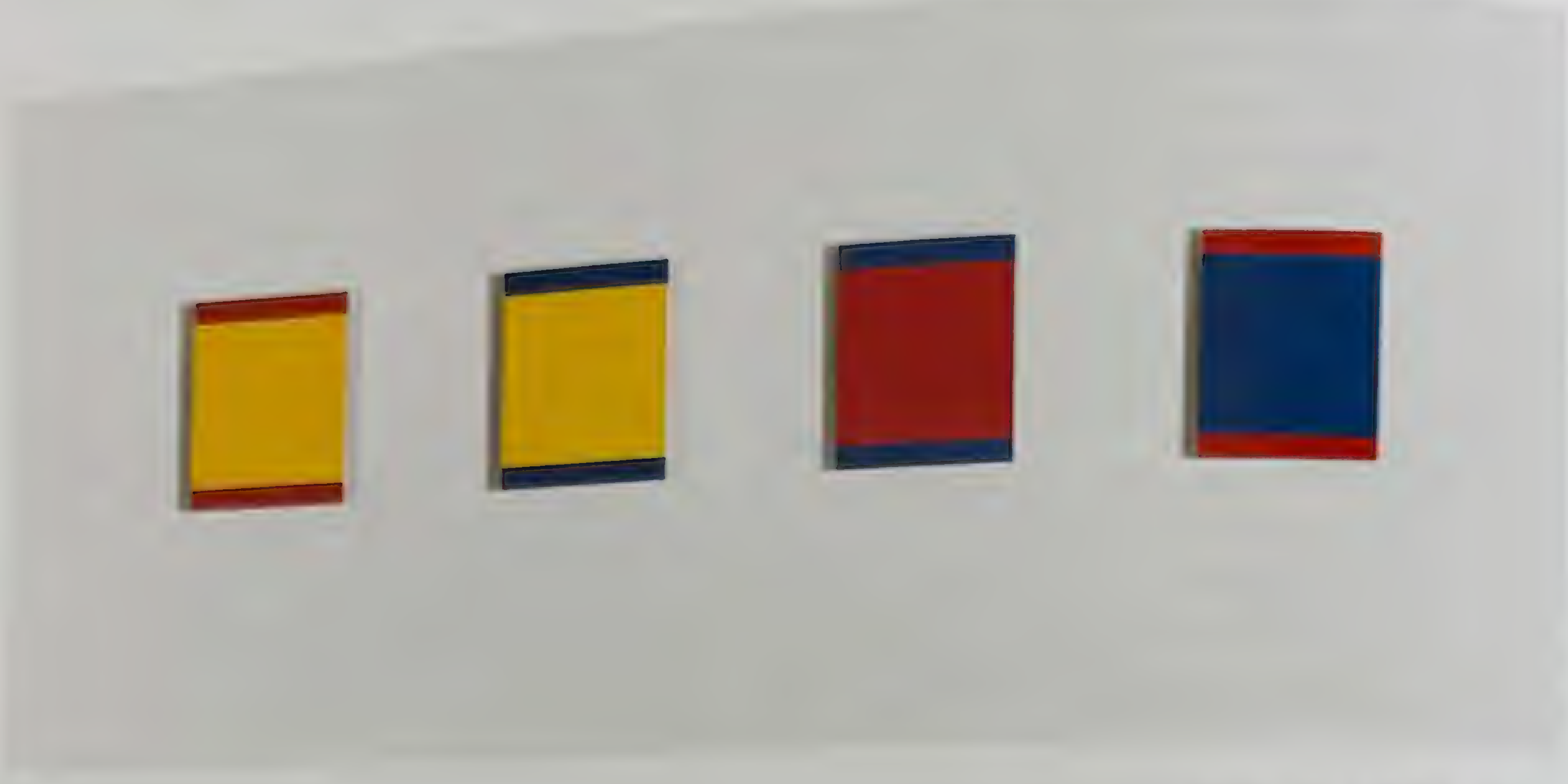


Fig. 117 *Red, Yellow, and Blue* (*Wvz* 177), 1975. Acrylic on aluminum, Four panels, each 26.8 x 21 x 0.3 cm, distance from wall, 1.6 cm. Kunstmuseum Bonn.

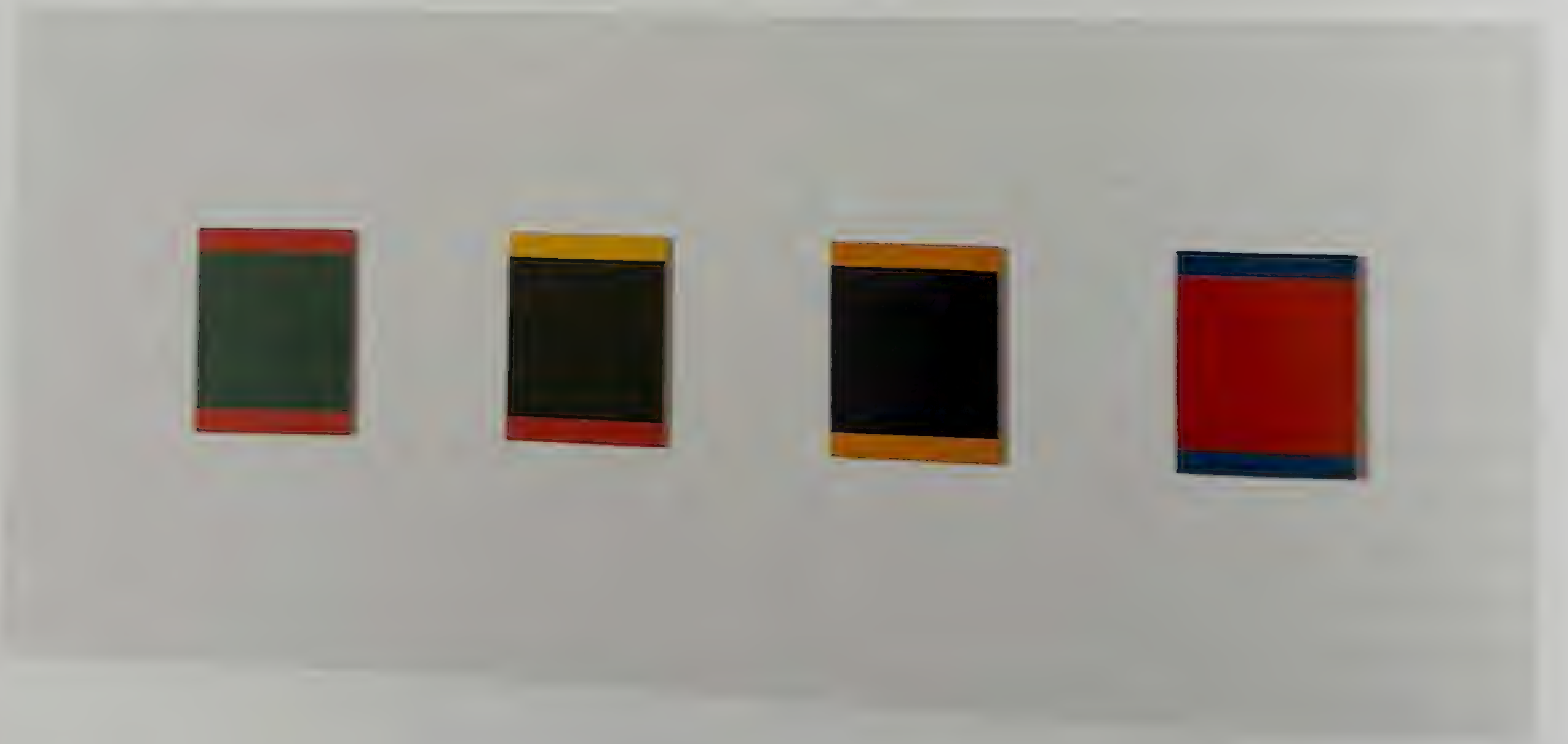


Fig. 118 *The Return* (*Wvz* 183), 1975. Acrylic on aluminum, four panels, each 26.7 x 21 x 0.2 cm, distance from wall, 1.5 cm. Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.

an exception in its break with a system. While the combination of black, red, and yellow in this panel would become central to Palermo's metal pictures in the following year, he did not pursue the option of unmatching bands further. In all the metal pictures, in fact, we are faced with a perfect balance between the suggestion of a system and its denial. We are left trapped in a game of optical and mental flicker that ends only with abrupt force or with a strong will to resist the temptation to return to play.

Unlike the *Coney Island* pair, the titles of the series *Times of the Day* and of the individual work *The Return* promise to be helpful, especially because the former was of considerable importance to Palermo: not only had *Times of the Day I* put an end to his several-year-long block, but the six-part series remained his most extensive and ambitious project among the metal pictures until he embarked on *to the people of N.Y.C.* after returning to Germany in 1976. In addition, Palermo used large-size panels for all six works, a scale that is not found among other metal pictures with the exception of *Schwarz, Rot, Weiss* and some of the panels of *to the people of N.Y.C.*

Artists throughout the ages have been fascinated with light and its varying degrees of intensities, and Palermo was no exception. His particular interest in the contrast of night and day dated back to the object *Tagtraum II (Nachtstück)* and the related drawing *Hymne an die Nacht (für Novalis)*, dating from 1966 and 1967, respectively (see figs. 24 and 23), and it reappeared most forcefully and obviously in his wall painting for the 1970 exhibition *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* in Edinburgh (see figs. 98 and 99). There, we recall, Palermo's color choices related to the light as it flooded through the skylight from changing angles over the course of a day, and the precarious experience of that wall painting obstructed the viewers' understanding of the color codes. In light of these earlier works, it appears that Palermo felt less inspired than confirmed in his interest in the changes of light by works that are often cited as implicit influences on the *Times of the Day* series: the Rothko Chapel and certain land artworks he saw with Knoebel in the deserts of the American West.[65]

Palermo returned yet again to the themes of morning and night, light and dark, when he included an excerpt from a letter to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe by the German Romantic painter Philipp Otto Runge on the back of the catalogue for his wall painting exhibition at the Kunstverein in Hamburg in March 1973, shortly before his second trip to the United States: "The brightness in a clear sky at sunrise, closely around the sun or in front of the sun, can be so strong that it is hardly bearable. Since that colorless clarity is the product of three colors (red—yellow—blue), we can infer that these colors would be so bright and so far removed beyond our abilities, that they would remain the same enigma for us as those colors sunken into darkness."[66] Palermo called the wall painting "Hommage à Philipp Otto Runge," and his second wife recalls him talking about its color changing with the light of day.[67] Yet the inclusion of the passage was probably motivated as much by the location of the exhibition: an extensive collection of paintings, drawings, and manuscripts by the primarily Hamburg-based Runge were housed at the Kunsthalle next door to the Kunstverein. These include pen-and-ink drawings of 1802–3 outlining Runge's plans for a series symbolically representing night, morning, day, and evening and, more significant, the only executed paintings of that cycle: two versions of *Der Morgen* (The Morning), a small picture dating from 1808 and a larger dating from 1809 (fig. 119). Palermo surely saw at least some of these works and may even have known Runge's 1803 construction drawings, also at the Kunsthalle, relating to the artist's intentions to create paintings about the times of day and the seasons as murals or architectonic decorations.[68]

How do these relate to the six series of four panels that make up *Times of the Day I–VI*? There is one recurring characteristic in each series: the darkest panel, or one of the darkest, is always at the far right, suggesting some form of correlation between the title and the sequencing of the members in each series—moving from morning on the left to evening or night on the right, for example. This would work well with Palermo's occasional effort to connect the far right panel back to the far left panel—using the same color for the bands in *Times of the Day IV* and *Times of the Day VI*—as if to suggest a cycle where night connects back to morning. But that temporal system does not work out as neatly as we might expect. In several cases the respective panels second from the right are, or appear to be, as dark as the far right panel, though they are usually framed by lighter top and bottom bands. In addition, the two left panels seem less clearly related to specific times of day, for unlike the Edinburgh wall painting, in which the brightest color (white) was associated with the location of the sun during the brightest time of day (south), the brightest panel in most if not in all of the *Times of the Day* works is located to the far left and thus, assuming a temporal sequence from left to right, identified with the morning. Taking into account that the variations in the color palette in the six series as a whole likewise do not connect with the seasons, in which Palermo also became interested, we are left to wonder whether he presented clues to a reasonable system only because he was breaking with it.[69]

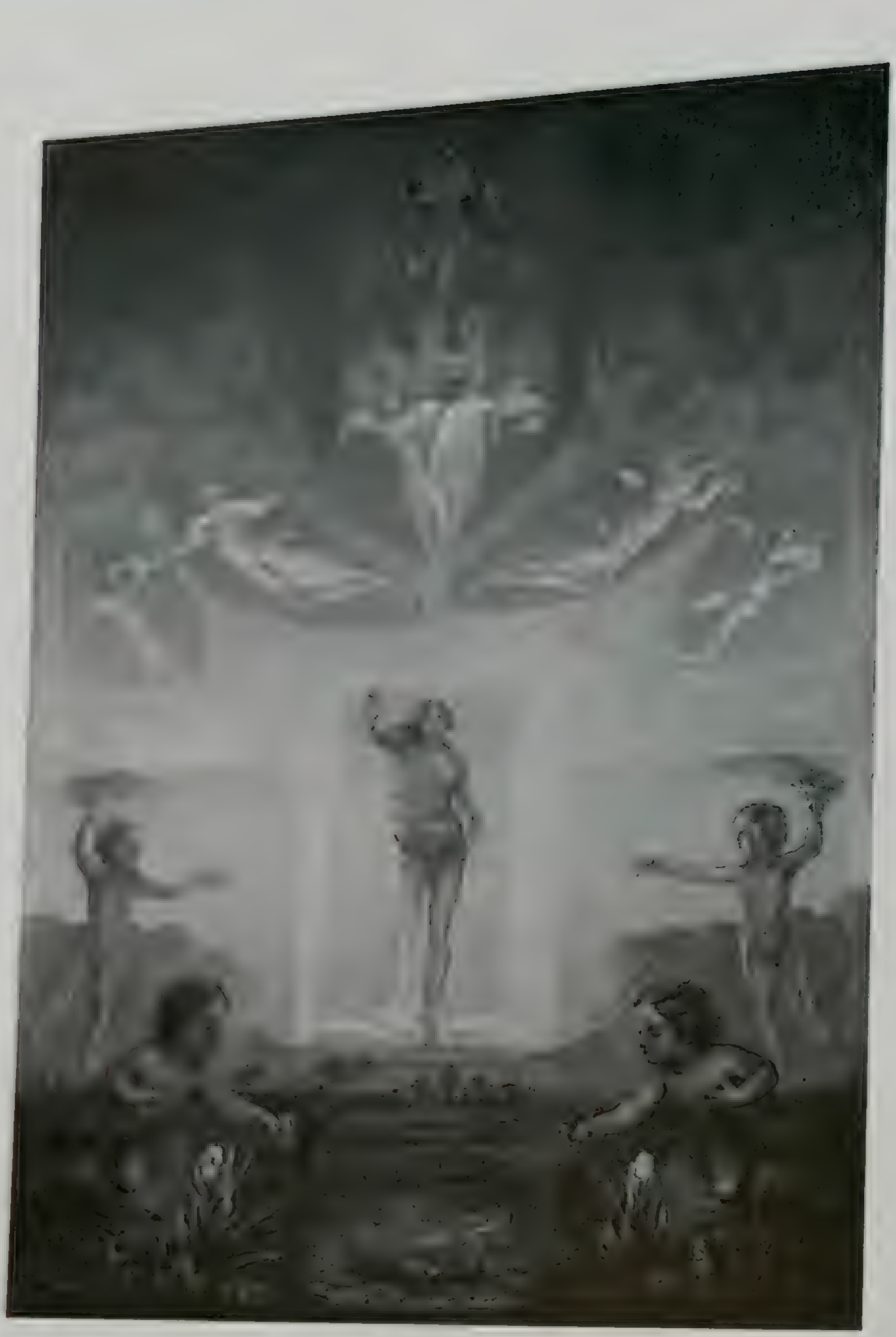


Fig. 119 Philipp Otto Runge, *Der Morgen* (The Morning), 1809. Oil on canvas, laid down, 131.5 x 143.5 cm. Hamburger Kunsthalle. Inv. 1022. © 2007 Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, N.Y.

Palermo's other metal pictures and late work offer support for this hypothesis. In almost all his serial metal pictures Palermo actually placed the darkest member to the right (see figs. 111, 112, 115, 117). In *The Return* of 1975, however, he shifted the two darkest members to the center, as if shifting evening and night (see fig. 118). The title probably refers to Palermo's return to New York from Germany following his installation of the Leverkusen exhibition in that year. And what more enhances our awareness of the times of day—of the spatial relativity of the times of day depending on our location as well as of the omnipresence of the cycle of times of day around the globe—than traveling between continents? Palermo's interest in such matters is confirmed by Gerhard Storck, who has reported conversations with the artist regarding an exhibition of his work revolving around the theme of the seasons at Haus Lange in

Krefeld: "The changes of light from cool to warm colours-these were the elements that Palermo then enthusiastically listed, when he had spoken of the architecture as of his pictures. And without transition he had subsequently told of his flights to New York, of the cycle of the seasons, of the growing feeling for the simultaneous perception of the constancy in the fluent change between departure and return. . . . He had deeply perceived the repeated return to New York—always under different light conditions; in different seasons, but recurring ones; with different experiences and expectations; but every time in an immediate way, without preparation. [In these situations] an extremely astute feeling for changes had mixed more and more with an increasing sense for constancy—again and again the same destination, the same arrival, the return also of the seasons. This mixture of concern and security, in connection with a growing sense for space and time, Palermo evaluated it then as extremely positive in regard to an increasing conception of his own painting: he saw it wholly confirmed in its foundations."[70] With *The Return*, then, Palermo "returned" to thinking about time, light, and color—about the times of day—in terms of space, as he had done in Edinburgh. The crucial change now, after several trips back and forth across the Atlantic, was that time and space had become relative, leading Palermo to a more playful approach to systems that worked through his cross-cultural perspective in sophisticated ways.

Indeed, in the metal picture series *Himmelsrichtungen* (Ordinal Directions) of 1976, Palermo again displaces, so to speak, the darkest member in the first of three four-part works from the far right panel to the second from right.[71] His awareness and experience of spatial relativity, I believe, led Palermo in that same year to alter the particulars of his color-ordinal equations in Edinburgh as he returned once again to the actual spatial installation of colors and began to blend his wall paintings with his metal pictures, notably in a different country if also in Europe.[72] In the installation *Himmelsrichtungen*, created in the summer of 1976 for the exhibition *Ambiente* at the Venice Biennale, the relation between colors and times of day differs from the one in the Edinburgh wall painting (fig. 120; see figs. 98, 99). In Scotland the dark blue stripe was located on the north side, the yellow on the east, the white on the south, and the red on the west. In Italy, Palermo installed four large glass panels—framed in black steel and covered from behind with thick layers of paint in, respectively, yellow, red, white, and black (the equivalent of the dark blue in Edinburgh)—diagonally across the corners of a room with a central skylight. As can readily be reconstructed based on mapping surviving color photographs onto the ground plan of the building, the yellow panel was located in the north, the black in the east, the white in the south, and the red in the west.[73] Palermo's system had changed, though not exactly systematically, with the new location—the north was now yellow instead of dark, the east now dark instead of yellow.

The same is true also for the plans Palermo developed in the spring of that year for a conference room in a new building under construction for the Bayerische Rückversicherung in Munich (fig. 121). As in Edinburgh and Venice, this installation, also entitled *Himmelsrichtungen*, was conceived in relation to changing light and ordinal directions, except that in Munich, Palermo was working in a circular space without any windows and he effectively simulated the times of day through the interplay of his work with artificial light. Palermo's plans had taken on a definitive shape—he had even built a prototype—but the project was never realized because the architecture itself turned out to be so controversial that no consensus could be reached about the installation.[74] In a letter to the architect, Uwe Kiessler, who was very supportive of the work, the artist described four 33-centimeter-tall open boxes made of steel placed into and flush with the wall, each containing a back panel set at varying angles, all painted yellow.[75] Palermo's construction drawing reveals that the panel in the east was meant to recede toward the right side, the one in the south toward the bot-

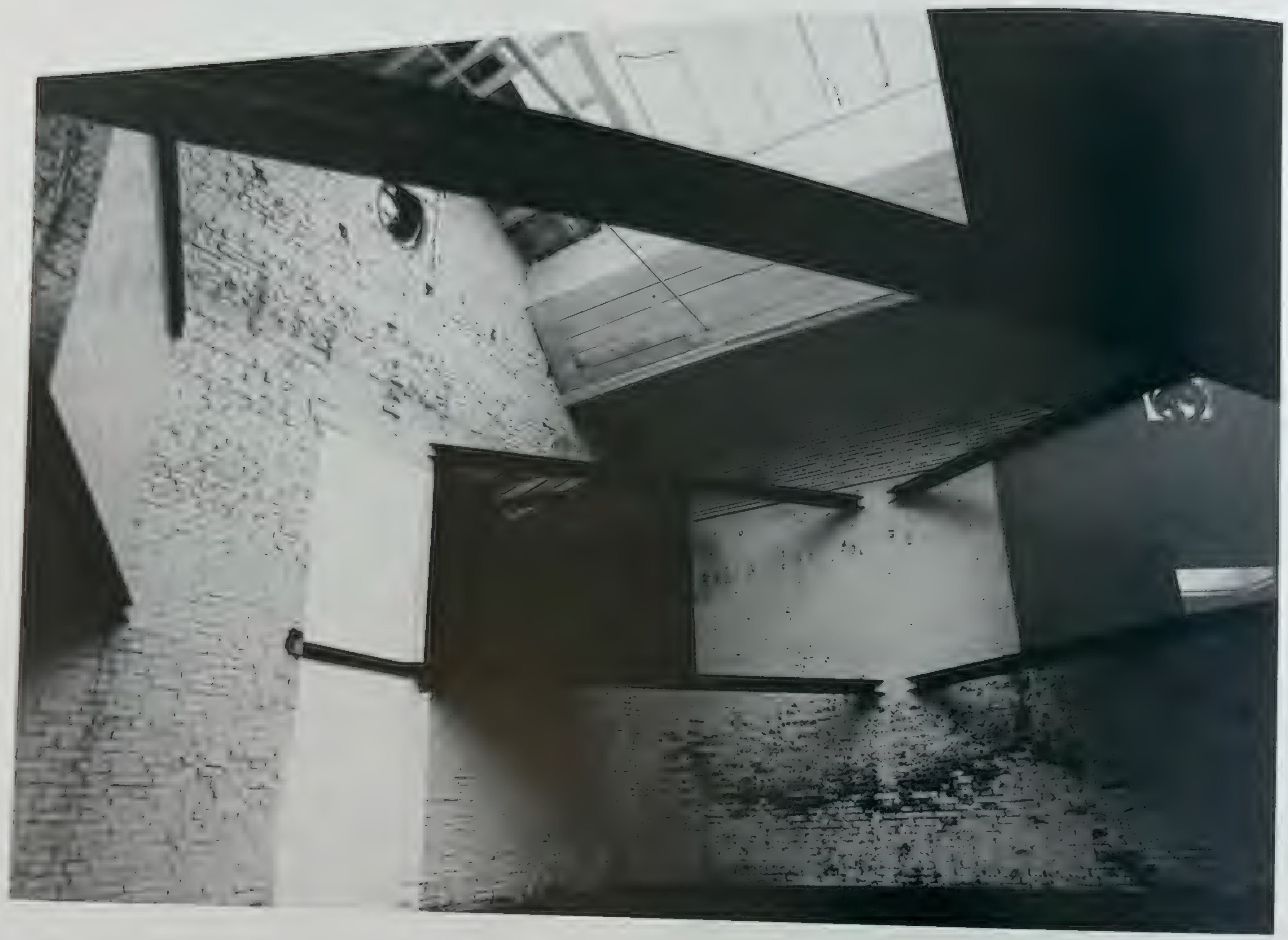


Fig. 120 *Himmelsrichtungen* (Ordinal Directions) (detail) at the Venice Biennale, 18 July–16 October 1976. Installation with steel, glass, and oil paint.

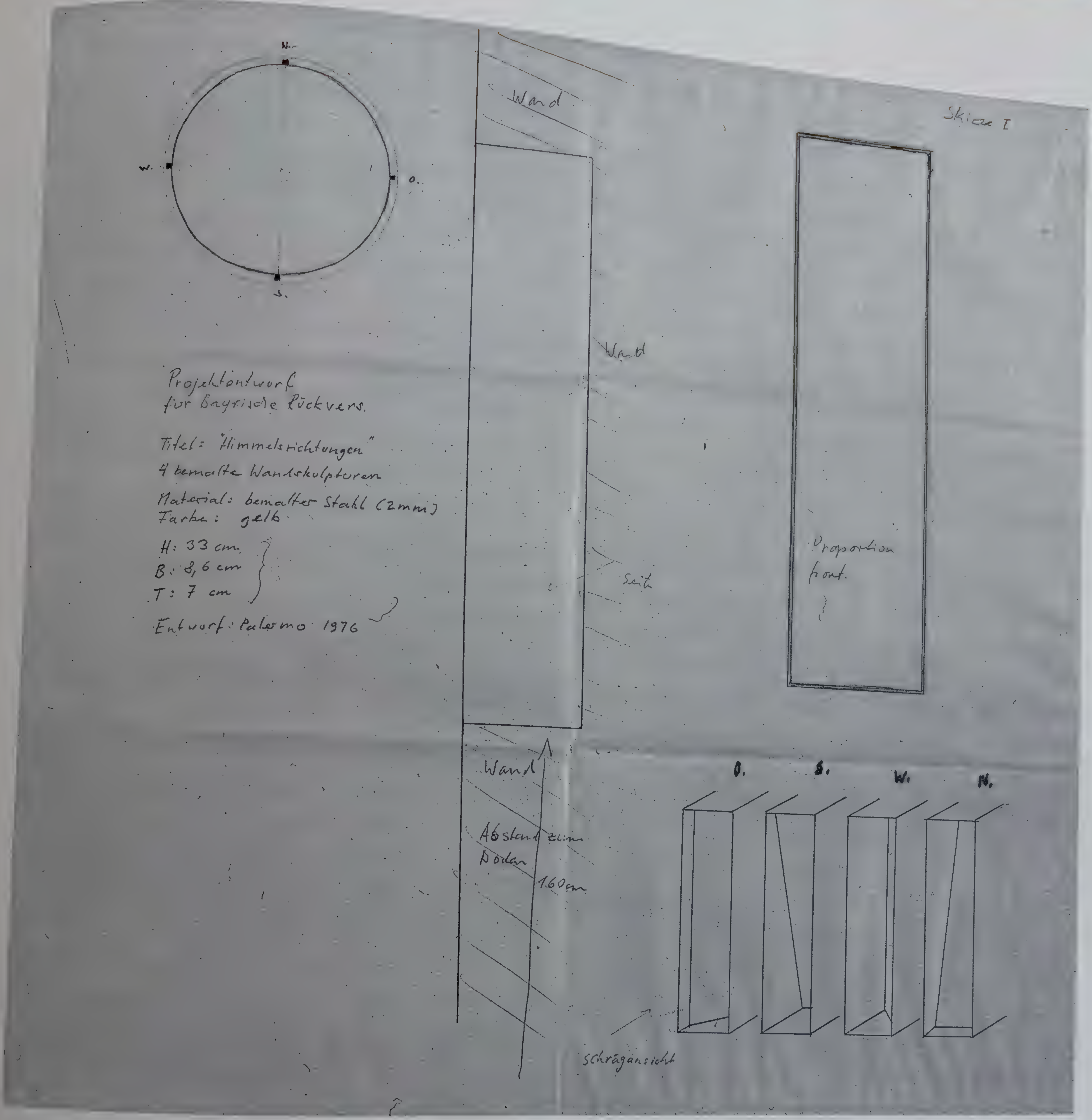

N.
W.
O.
S.
Wand
Skizze I
Projektentwurf
für Bayrische Rückvers.
Titel: "Himmelsrichtungen"
4 bemalte Wandskulpturen
Material: bemalter Stahl (2mm)
Farbe: gelb
H: 33 cm
B: 8,6 cm
T: 7 cm
Entwurf: Palermo 1976
Wand
Proportion front
Seite
Wand
O.
S.
W.
N.
Abstand zum Boden
160cm
Schrägansicht

Fig. 121 *Für "Himmelsrichtungen"* (For "Ordinal Directions") (*Wvz* 578), drawing for a never-executed work at the Bayerische Rückversicherung, Munich, 1976. Pencil and red and black felt pen on parchment paper, 60.5 x 62 cm. Collection of Heidi and Uwe Kiessler, Munich.

tom, the one in the west toward the left, and the one in the north toward the top. The facing east and west boxes would thus have had their panels open up, as it were, toward the south and taper in toward the north. The facing north and south panels would have simulated the lack of light and the most intense light, respectively, for with their installation heights starting at 160 centimeters above the ground, a viewer would have barely been able to see the northern plane but would have stared directly into the southern one. As the artist wrote, "I regard this project as very suitable for the conference room of the Bayer. Rückversicherung, because in this way, among other things, four directions (fixed points, ordinal directions) are created in a nearly directionless . . . circular room."[76] While in the Munich installation Palermo also devised a system that was highly specific to its intended location, it seems less playful and open ended. This may have something to do with the fact that, unlike the works discussed above, the Rückversicherung piece was not engaged with a cross-cultural experience, despite being highly reminiscent of Judd's mid-seventies work with open boxes that appear perspectivally distorted or have angled interiors.[77]

Why then this play with systems and with systems based on location in the other works—*Times of the Day, The Return*, the Biennale *Himmelsrichtungen*, and, as we will see shortly, *to the people of N.Y.C.*? For one, Palermo's metal pictures seek solutions to problems he intuited in minimalist and conceptual art. An aspect Palermo's metal pictures shared with minimalist sculpture is the appearance of an underlying system, however simple or complicated it may be. Judd, for one, used simple mathematical systems like progressions in his work in order to avoid rational thinking and circumvent the making of decisions. For Judd, as noted before, what was important was not so much that viewers actually understood or recognized the specific system (the average viewer would not), but that they would intuit the fact that there was an underlying system.[78] With his metal pictures, Palermo exposes the disconnect inherent in such assumptions. If the point is for the viewer to intuit a system broadly but not specifically, why does there need to be an actual system in the first place? Why not simply allude to and play with the *appearance* of a system? By the same token, Palermo had also witnessed in the late sixties and early seventies the rise of conceptual art, which was highly visible in Germany in its early years, especially at the Galerie Konrad Fischer exhibitions in Düsseldorf. Both in Germany and the United States, conceptual art was received at the time as simply a dematerialization of the art object, the replacement of the visual, physical object with a concept or idea of it.[79] To many artists, this was a lamentable development, and it especially upset painters like Gerhard Richter and Palermo. Not unlike the work of borderline conceptualists such as Sol LeWitt and Mel Bochner, Palermo's metal pictures insist on the possibility of a visually engaged mind while also warning about the limitations of that mind.[80]

TO THE PEOPLE OF N.Y.C.

Palermo's play with systems and with systems based on location also seemed motivated by the broader situation of American art at that moment and by his transatlantic experience. If Palermo became increasingly aware of widespread European misunderstandings of American art after moving to New York, perhaps he also felt increasingly constrained, if not shocked, by the numerous specialized discourses that dominated art making in the United States. Every step and every move could be—and was—categorized: seriality, painting, color, space, the viewer. As the critic Peter Schjeldahl astutely observed in hindsight, "The 1960s played some dirty tricks on abstract painting. . . . The possibility of serious abstraction was increasingly threatened by the Scylla of Greenbergian color-field painting—a sterile formula, but championed by a mighty array of critics, curators, and dealers—and the truly disheartening Charybdis of minimalism, which held all painting in contempt."[81] By putting systems into play, Palermo created a space for himself where he could make a step without merely being boxed into the next category.

It is in this context of breaking free from American art-world paradigms that we can make sense of the metal pictures' refreshing (some might say awkward) confluences and misfits: their three-dimensional use of thin planes; their non-medium-specific choice of acrylic paint on metal; their strikingly visible paint application, which appears almost filled in and is neither gesturally expressive nor elegantly invisible; their straightly delimited fields and bands, which up close reveal buckles and knicks; their crisp, rectangular shapes, rounded by paint wrapping thickly around the edges. Palermo was not returning to his origins, to the expressionist gestures of German art that he had tackled in the objects. These peculiar visual qualities are far from his "German" beginnings, from the objects' engagement with expressionism. Instead, the surfaces of the metal pictures tame gestural expression to the verge of extinction, keeping just enough of it in play to crack open the deadlock of perfection and slickness in American abstract painting.

At the same time, Palermo also opened up a space for other young artists. The wide variety of artists who have paid tribute to Palermo in various ways—ranging from David Reed, Steven Ellis, and Julian Schnabel to Stephen Prina and Rirkrit Tiravanija—stand testimony to his importance. Armed with a truly transatlantic perspective, Palermo made metal pictures that were both specifically German (in their misreading of American art) and specifically American (in their answer to the hermetic systems and theories of the American art world). Palermo thus collapsed, which is to say both acknowledged and disregarded, national boundaries in a way that resonated with the increasingly international art world of the 1970s and beyond.

Palermo's last metal picture, *to the people of N.Y.C.*, was found partially installed in the artist's studio on Harkortstrasse in Düsseldorf after his death on 17 February 1977. Based on consistent signatures and date inscriptions on the verso and various drawings, the work is commonly understood and exhibited as a finished work, completed at the end of 1976 (figs. 122, 123, 124, see fig. 161).[82] Earlier that year Palermo had decided to stay in Germany for a while, in part because he had met a woman during a visit to Düsseldorf at the beginning of 1976 with whom he became involved.[83] It is important that it was in Germany that he developed the idea for this ambitious, large-scale work dedicated to the people of New York City. The cycle consists of fifteen segments made of thirty-nine individual panels in total that are painted in combinations of black, red, and yellow.[84] Nine of the fifteen are reminiscent of the previous metal pictures in that they consist of multiple parts (three made of three parts and six made of four parts) and are painted with the by-now familiar top and bottom bands framing a central field. Unlike the previous metal pictures, which were made of panels in variations of two sizes, these nine segments come in variations of three sizes. The remaining six members of the work are large-scale panels that, with two exceptions, measure one by two meters and are divided as a triptych, with two flanking vertical rectangles framing a central field. While in New York, Palermo had painted a few related diptych metal pictures of two separate square panels that were each divided vertically but joined in such a way as to form a single central square color field.[85] While these diptychs and triptychs appear less well developed than the serial metal picture model, they were apparently grounds on which Palermo further worked out questions of continuity and break, repetition and permutation. This is particularly clear when considering Palermo's inclusion of these types in *to the people of N.Y.C.*

Palermo's magnum opus, as Robert Storr has rightly labeled *to the people of N.Y.C.*, presents a culmination of Palermo's paintings on metal, perhaps even a culmination of his oeuvre.[86] With this cycle, Palermo almost overstates the case at the core of the metal pictures, that is, the collapse, the preservation of, and the move beyond nationally specific art. He exaggerates German simplifications and misreadings of American art: seriality, large scale, incor-

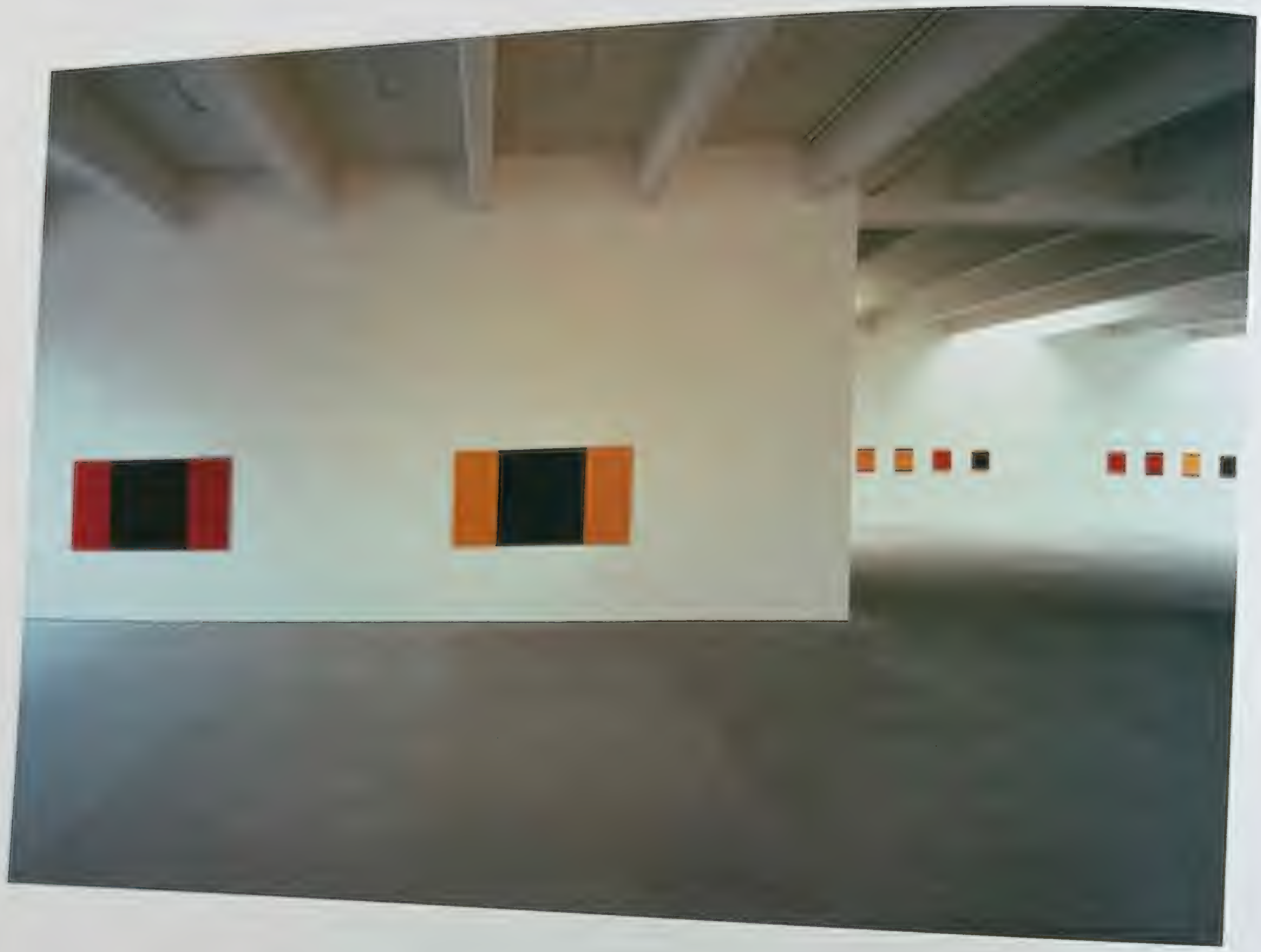


Fig. 122 *to the people of N.Y.C.* (*Wvz* 199), 1976, as installed at the Dia Center for the Arts, New York, 9 October 1987–19 June 1988. Acrylic on aluminum, forty panels arranged in fifteen segments of varying dimensions. Dia Art Foundation, New York.

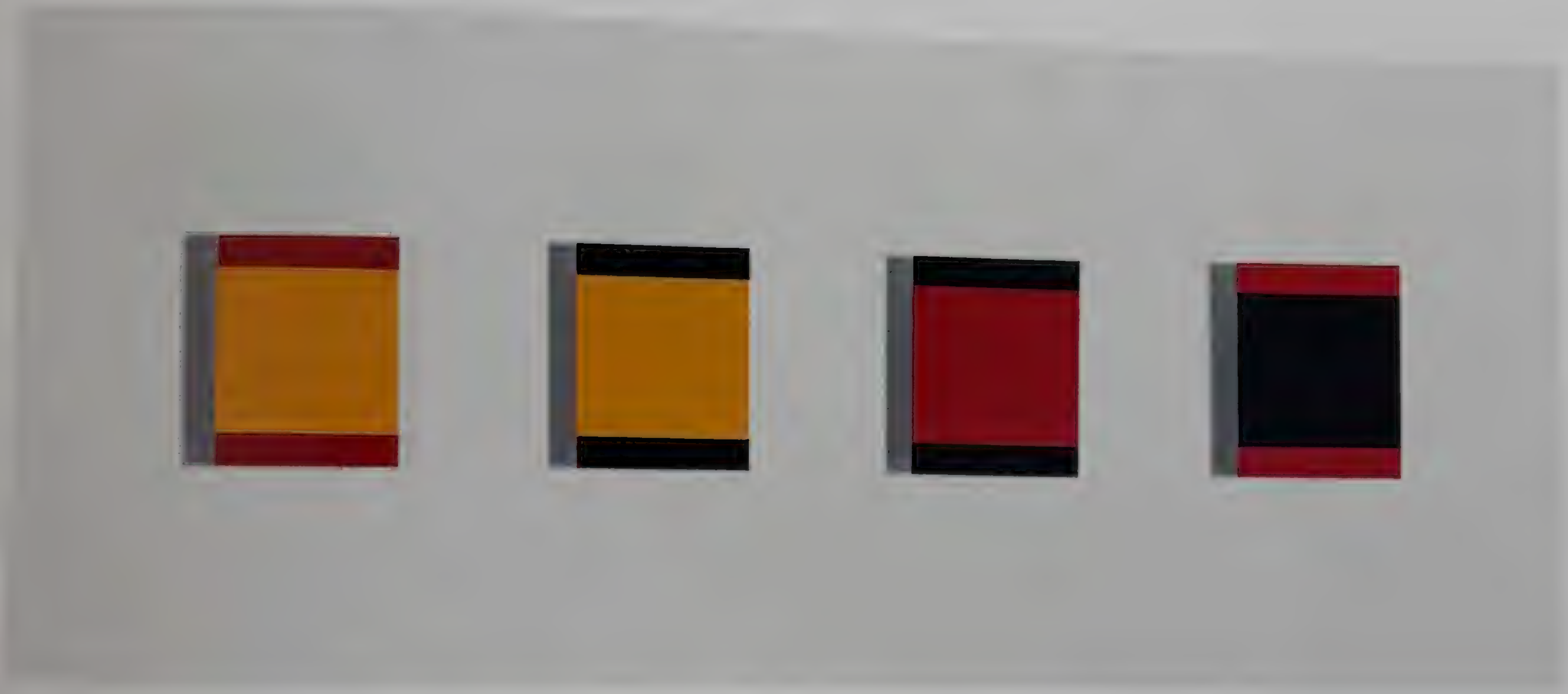


Fig. 123 *to the people of N.Y.C.* (detail) (*Wvz* 199 II), 1976. Acrylic on aluminum. Dia Art Foundation, New York.

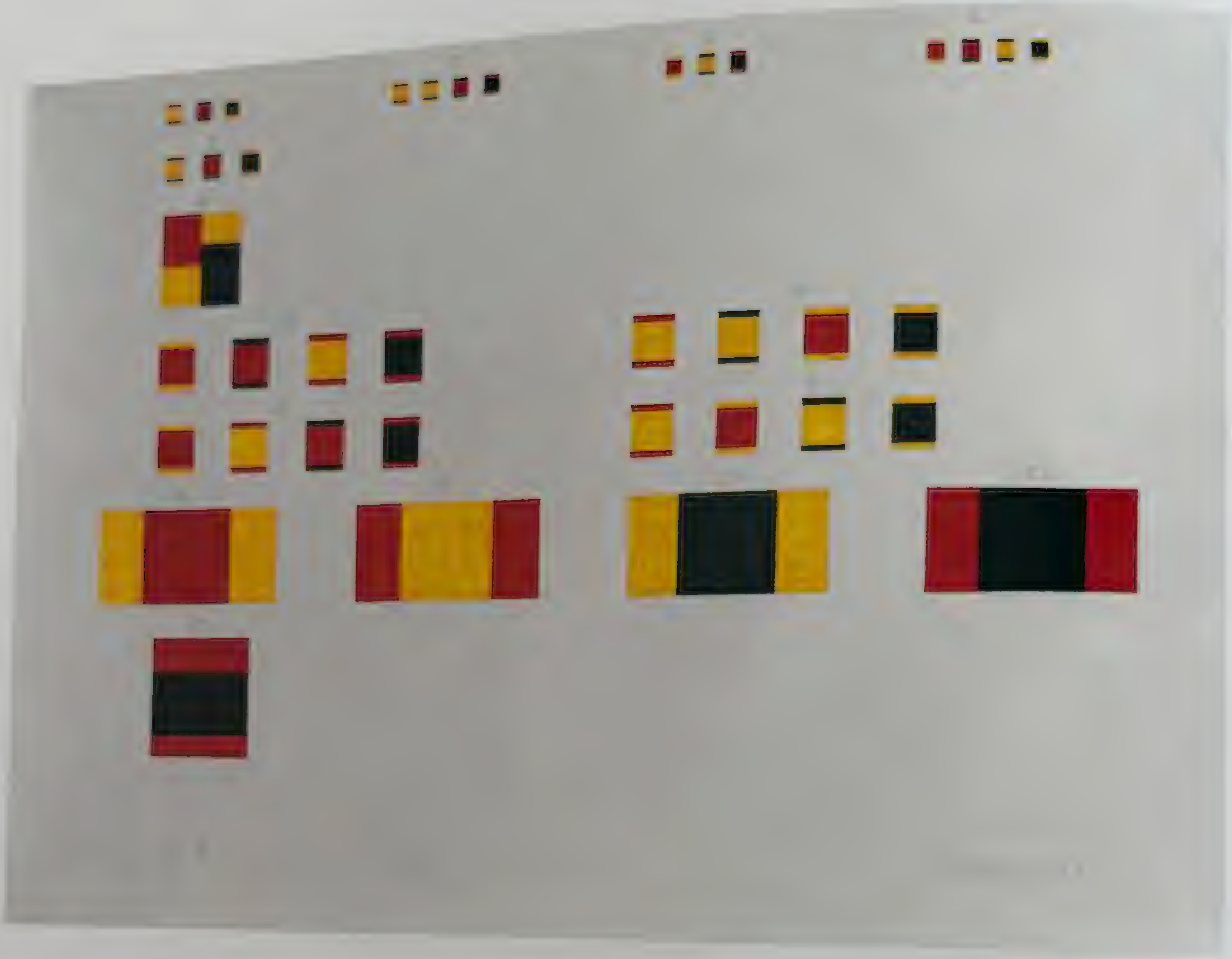


Fig. 124 Untitled sketch for *to the people of N.Y.C.* (*Wvz* 483), 1976. Acrylic on drafting paper glued on cardboard, 24 x 32.5 cm. Private collection.

poration of real space and viewer, dazzling colors, hovering planes. At the same time he exaggerates the play with a system, which has grown infinitely more complicated and twisted because of the large number of panels, their varying sizes, the varying number of members in the subseries, new types of compositions in the six large-scale panels, and their circular installation in a large space.[87]

The cross-cultural perspective of *to the people of N.Y.C.* has to be seen as engaging in explicit dialogue with Beuys's May 1974 performance *I Like America and America Likes Me*, in which the artist flew into Kennedy Airport wrapped in felt and then spent three days with a coyote at the New York branch of Galerie René Block on West Broadway. Palermo's studio on Wooster Street was a little over a block away, and he surely stopped by to see his former teacher's performance. Beuys's work is undoubtedly as complex as Palermo's. But unlike the painting cycle, the performance was not about a relationship between cultures but about an individual, embodied by Beuys and stressed in the title's "I" and "Me," taming, as it were, a cultural other, embodied by the indigenous North American coyote. Unlike Palermo, Beuys does not take on his own German sensibility and tradition, does not intertwine the two cultures.[88]

It seems only fitting that Palermo probably conceived of *to the people of N.Y.C.* on a transatlantic flight back home, as Gottschaller has suggested, for his own cross-cultural perspective is a central precondition for the work. Among the first sketches is a drawing on light blue airmail paper printed with the Lufthansa logo.[89] That perspective is reflected most prominently in Palermo's title—so different from Piet Mondrian's matter-of-fact *New York City* (1942) or even Jean Tinguely's more reserved *Homage to New York* (1960)—and the fact that he wrote the title on the verso and the accompanying drawings in lower case, initially abbreviating the name as "N.Y.C" and then switching to "N.Y.C." (though the title is rarely given that way in published sources). While the dedication by definition excludes its writer—Palermo is not part of the people of New York—it is an intimate gesture to someone he knows well.[90]

Above all, the colors that Palermo chose for *to the people of N.Y.C.* identify this as a cross-cultural work, for they are doubly culturally specific. Combined with the panels' divisions, which allude to flags, the colors black, red, and yellow inevitably read, to a German audience, as the German national colors. Beuys was the first in a long list of viewers to associate the colors in the Venice *Himmelsrichtungen* installation with the "German national colors Black, Red, Gold."[91] At the same time, the combination of black, red, yellow, and white—in the form of the white wall that in its expansiveness is integral to the work—suggests Native American color schemes, at least it would have done to the New York audience that Palermo had in mind. The press release for the first exhibition of the work at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in New York in May–June 1977, shortly after Palermo's death, stated that it deals with "a concept in which [Palermo] became interested while investigating a scheme of color used by the American Indian," and Palermo reportedly told a friend shortly before his death that "he was interested in the research of a true American sense of color."[92] A contemporary review discussed Palermo's black, red, yellow, and white in the 1976 Venice Biennale *Himmelsrichtungen* in terms of "Indian symbolic colors."[93] Given his own cross-cultural experiences, Palermo was probably less interested in pursuing the meanings of the color scheme within a specific native group but was inspired rather by its use among many different Native American peoples for many different cultural purposes—including ordinal directions, the seasons, the times of day, and medicine wheels.

Palermo had ample opportunity to learn about these variations.[94] Toward the end of his life, he gave a friend a book about Navajo sand paintings that repeatedly shows combinations of red (sometimes in the form of pink), yellow, black (sometimes in the form of dark blue), and white. Sand paintings were images made by sprinkling sand colored with natural pigments onto the floors of ceremonial houses, and the material probably struck a chord with Palermo, who was always eager to expand the materials of painting. It is notable that the symbolic meanings associated with the colors shift throughout the book, though they usually refer to the ordinal directions and the times of day. For example, the caption for the first plate, *Scavenger in the Eagle's Nest*, explains: "The large blue circle is the house, blue because it is in the sky. The black line around it represents darkness; the white is dawn or morning light; the yellow, evening light; and red, protection from danger." By contrast, the caption for plate 31 posits that "the Huckel painting has corn corresponding in color to the colors of the nearest Thunders: black at the east, yellow (for variegated) at the south, blue at the west, pink at the north. Since pink is used for white when Thunders are concerned, the corn at the northeast belonging to Pink Thunder is white."[95] By all accounts it would have been uncharacteristic of Palermo to study the book systematically, for he was a man who, as his friend Knoebel cautioned, "brought something different back from every trip he took."[96] Nevertheless, it would have been impossible for Palermo to miss the prominence of the color symbolism there, as well as in much other literature on Native American cultures, or to ignore the book's color reproductions of sand paintings, which frequently group four colors around a center and prominently use framing elements, both of which resonate in Palermo's late work.[97]

Palermo's encounters with original Native American art probably made the biggest impression on him. His wife Kristin recalled visiting what she called the National Museum of Ethnography in Spanish Harlem with him, while Knoebel reports visiting a reservation with Palermo as well as going to the "Museum of the American Indian" in Harlem but being unable to get in because it was closed that day.[98] This was the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, on 155th Street in New York City, which later became the National Museum of the American Indian and relocated to Washington, D.C.[99] The museum's extensive collection encompassed objects from all the Americas, and we cannot determine exactly what Palermo learned from it about the meanings of specific colors in various Native

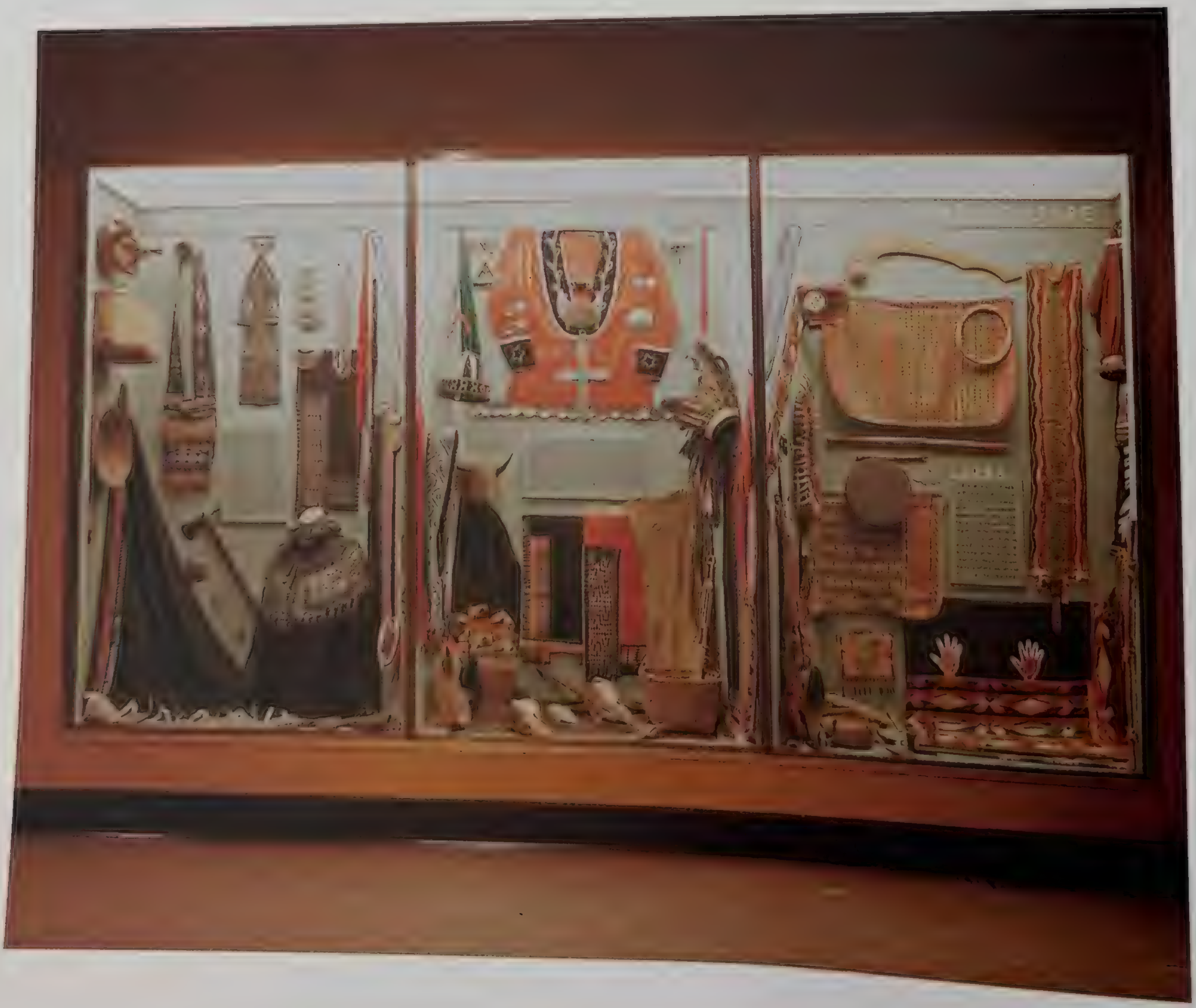


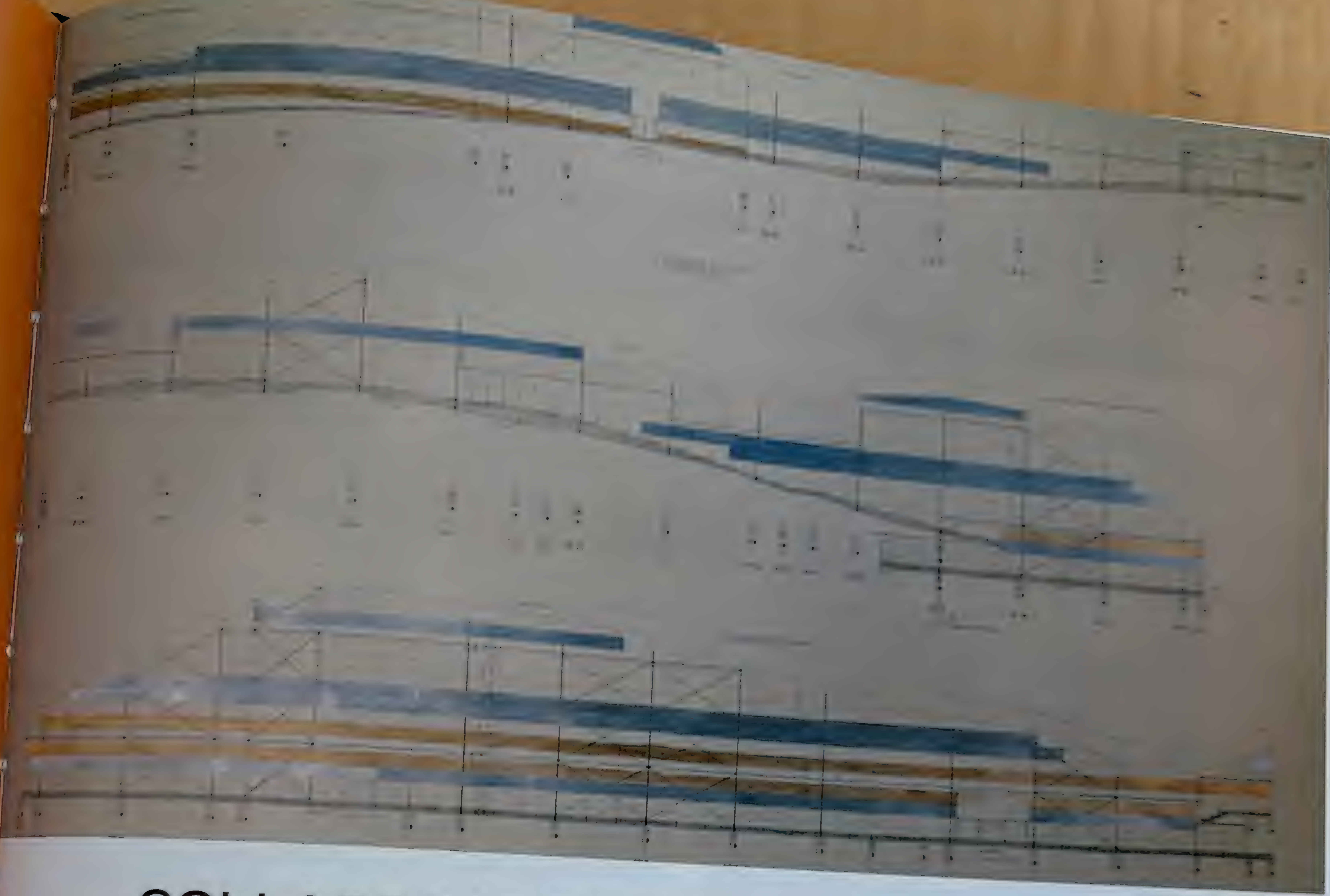
Fig. 125 Miami, Shawnee, and Iowa exhibition case on the first floor of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 155th Street and Broadway, New York, as it appeared in the 1970s, photographed in the 1980s

American cultures. But the pervasiveness of abstraction in Native American art generally must have intrigued Palermo. Some thirty years earlier, Barnett Newman had cited Northwest Coast Indian painting as a lesson "to all those who assume that modern abstract art is the esoteric exercise of a snobbish elite, for among these simple peoples, abstract art was the normal, well-understood, dominant tradition. Shall we say that modern man has lost the ability to think on so high a level?"[100] For Palermo, as for Newman, Native American abstraction probably inspired confidence at a moment when both felt pressed to defend themselves—Newman against socialist calls for realism, Palermo and Richter against calls for an end to painting. More specifically, from photographs of the cases displaying objects from North America as Palermo would have seen them, including one of the first floor with artifacts from the Miami, Shawnee, and Iowa (fig. 125), it seems that even in a brief visit he would have acquired a sense of the overall palette of Native American art, dominated by blacks (or dark blues), reds, yellows (or ochers), and whites.[101]

Although we can confirm only that Palermo visited the Museum of the American Indian in April 1973, he might have known about the museum, even seen parts of its collection, as early as late 1969, when the exhibition *Indianer Nordamerikas—Schätze des Museum of the American Indian—Heye Foundation—New York* (Indians of North America—Treasures of the Museum of the American Indian—Heye Foundation—New York) came to the Kunsthalle Cologne, located less than an hour from Palermo's residence in Düsseldorf.[102] The combination of dark blue verging on black, red, yellow, and white suddenly appeared in his work in 1970, probably early in the year, in an untitled object made of four fifteen-by-fifteen-by-five-centimeter boxlike canvases (see fig. 35). If Palermo indeed purposely left open ended the hanging of this untitled object and intended the owner or curator to determine the exact configuration of its four components—as the original owner's widow noted—then the artist may already have had an intimation in this first use of a Native American palette about the colors' relation to spatial orientation and their shifting meanings depending on culture, location, and context.[103] The object was followed that same year, before Palermo's first trip to New York, by the wall painting in Edinburgh, which used these same colors, now clearly linked to space and the times of day. That relation was then solidified in the three-part metal picture series *Himmelsrichtungen* and in the Venice Biennale installation *Himmelsrichtungen* in 1976.

How do these color and cultural connotations relate to our experience of *to the people of N.Y.C.*? Perhaps Palermo is calling on "the people of New York City" and, by implication, American artists, to turn to Native American art as a tradition both rich in abstract painting and locally specific, in marked contrast to the new, universalizing American art that was sweeping the Western world. But in addition, the double cultural references of the color scheme, to the German national colors and to Native American color schemes, are yet another instance of Palermo's playful engagement with seemingly complicated but ultimately nonexistent systems and rules in order both to preserve and to overcome national and cultural boundaries. Both *to the people of N.Y.C.* and the Venice *Himmelsrichtungen* installation achieve this mainly by virtue of their colors. And what better contexts for such a project than the general exhibition of the Venice Biennale, founded on the basis of side-by-side national self-representations, and a young German's moving, intimate dedication to the people of New York City?

5



COLLABORATIONS WITH GERHARD RICHTER, 1970–1971

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES

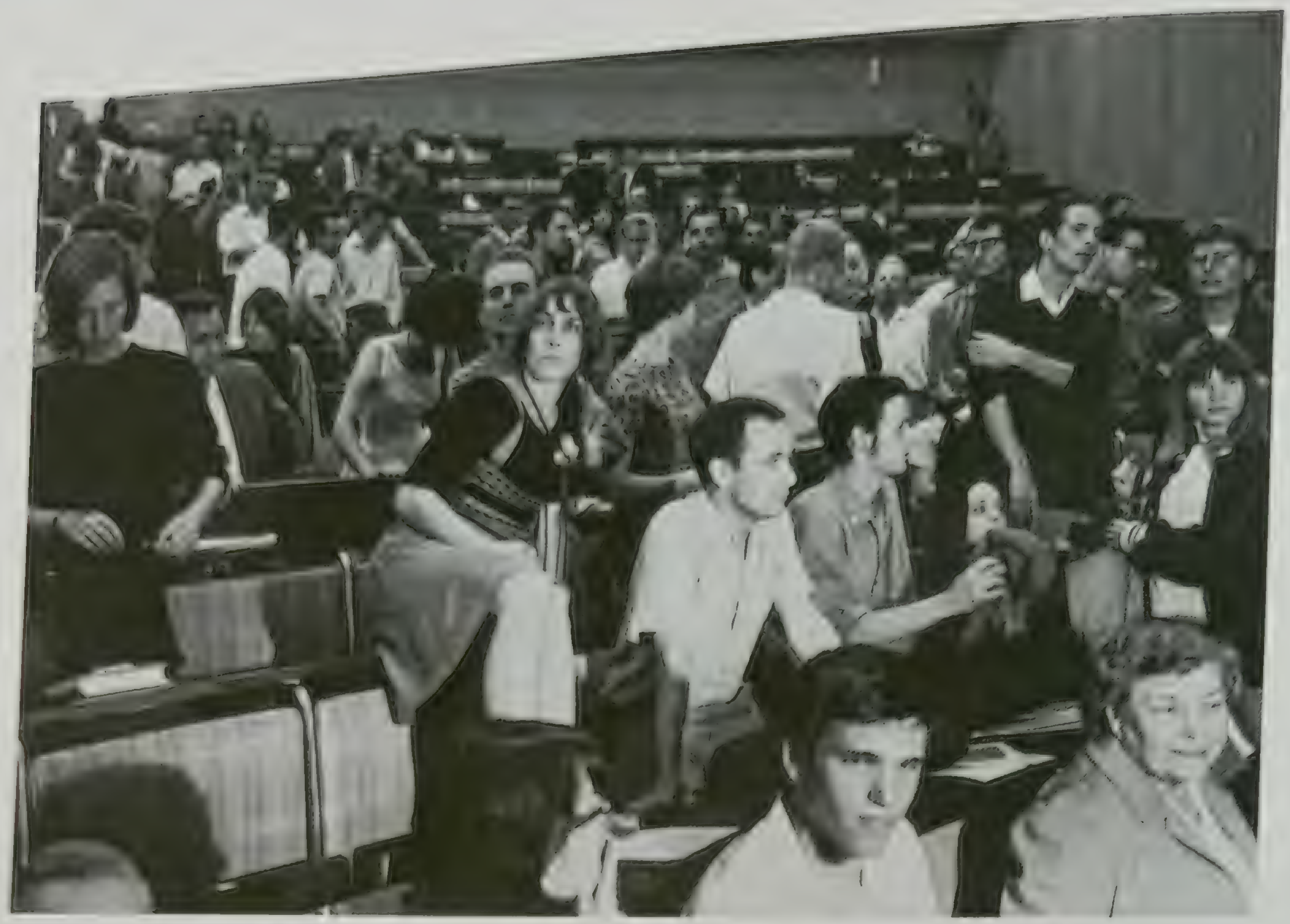


Fig. 126 Gerhard Richter and Palermo at the *Festival der Neuen Kunst*, Technische Hochschule, Aachen, 20 July 1964. Photograph. © 2007 Estate of Heinrich Riebesehl.

"There's someone hanging upstairs in Goller's [class], that's quite beautiful." Thus around 1963 did Konrad Fischer, then known as Konrad Lueg, introduce his painter friend Gerhard Richter to the work of Palermo. Richter remembers small pictures that had something quiet about them.[1] By the next year Palermo and Richter were going to art events together, for example to the *Festival der Neuen Kunst* in Aachen (fig. 126). Palermo and Richter differed in their personal backgrounds, their temperaments and, to some degree, their work. That they were eleven years apart in age must have seemed significant when they first met; Palermo was nineteen and Richter had just turned thirty-one. Although they were both born in East Germany—Palermo in Leipzig and Richter in Dresden—Palermo had moved to the West as a child, while Richter was already a mature socialist realist painter when he left East Germany in 1961.[2] Comparing his relationship with Palermo to those he had with Lueg and Sigmar Polke, Richter stressed, "We were never competitive, because we were so different. I could always respect that, that he could make something so quiet. That was all so alien to me."[3]

Over the years Palermo and Richter enjoyed an intense artistic rapport that began in 1966 when the two created works that entered into a dialogue with one another and culminated in 1970–71 with a series of largely unknown collaborations.[4] Their contributions to these collaborations nonetheless retained a distinct individuality and relate closely to the work they made independently. Collaborations often propel artists in new directions, and Palermo's interactions with Richter and his work played an important role at crucial moments in his artistic development. At the same time, collaborations help artists better understand their own major concerns through a recognition of what they are willing to compromise on—and what they are not. As his collaborations with Richter demonstrate, the notoriously taciturn Palermo had a clear sense of direction for his art, and he would talk about art among his intimates. As Richter explained to Anne Rorimer shortly after Palermo's death, although "Palermo never spoke about his work in theoretical terms . . . he talked about art a great deal."[5]

The common ground that Palermo and Richter found in their working relationship clarified for Palermo what he most cared about: assessing the artistic and social relevance of painting and expanding its possibilities. Through their shared experiences, Palermo and Richter pursued these goals in a distinctly European way. Based on their mutual investigation into the relevance of painting and their joint sense of European identity, Palermo and Richter developed an "elective affinity" as defined by Goethe's Charlotte in his 1809 novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (Elective Affinities): "When you call these strange substances 'related' I think not so much of blood relationships as of intellectual or spiritual ones. In the human world this is how truly meaningful friendships come about; for natures that are opposites make for a more intimate union."[6] The principle of elective affinities—opposites that complement each other without losing their own identities—not only describes Palermo and Richter's personalities and artistic interests but also goes to the core of their collaborative works.

DIALOGUE, 1966

The professional connection between Palermo and Richter began in 1966, at a time when their respective careers were on the rise and their personal lives had each taken an important turn. Following his marriage the previous year, Palermo graduated from the Düsseldorf academy, was appointed Beuys's Meisterschüler, and had his first one-man exhibition at Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem in Munich. Probably after this debut, Palermo developed the first works to break from the influence of Beuys: his signature blue triangle and gray disk and the first cloth pictures, which not only sparked the professional engagement between Palermo and Richter but fostered a closer personal relationship.[7] Richter accompanied Palermo while shopping for fabrics, and Palermo hung around the Richters' house while Richter's wife, Ema, sewed cloth pictures based on his instructions.[8] Richter recalls "pleasant memories, when my wife Ema sewed, and we sat and drank coffee, it was so comfortable and nice."[9]

Richter was at a more advanced but equally important stage in his career. He had signed a two-year contract with Heiner Friedrich that from May onward guaranteed him a monthly income, which was especially welcome because Ema, whom he painted that month in his famous *Ema: Akt auf einer Treppe* (Ema: Nude on a Staircase), was pregnant (fig. 127). In October, Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem showed *Farbtafeln* (Color Charts), which presented the artist's most direct venture yet into abstraction; from here on, Richter would alternate between abstract and figurative modes of painting, the practice for which he has become best known (fig. 128).[10]

Palermo's cloth pictures and Richter's color charts complement and illuminate each other, and they launched an artistic dialogue between their creators. Richter later acknowledged that his decision to paint

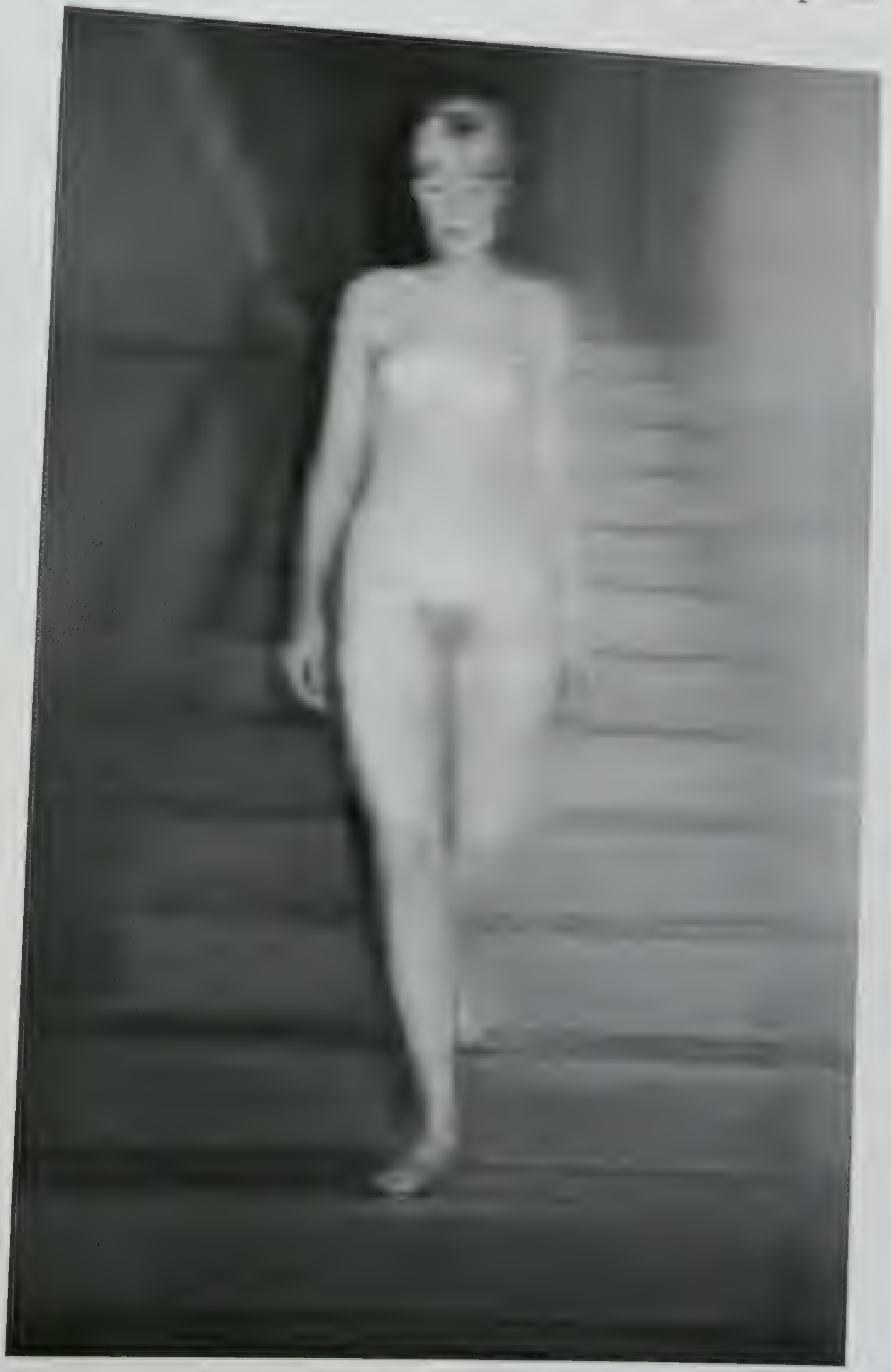


Fig. 127 Gerhard Richter, *Ema: Akt auf einer Treppe* (Ema: Nude on a Staircase), 1966. Oil on canvas, 200 x 130 cm. Museum Ludwig, Cologne. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

nonfigurative pictures with the color charts had "something to do with Palermo and his interests."[11] The cloth pictures made a particular impression on him. "It was simply amazing, when I came into his studio, I liked that stuff. He had a totally unkempt, small studio, and then there stood, as if surrounded by a halo, a pure cloth picture, completely clean and clear! That was a beautiful sight! That impressed me." Elsewhere he noted, "His constructive pictures have remained in my memory because they particularly appeal to me, because I can't produce such a thing. I always found it very good how he made it and that he made it—this astonished me. There was an aesthetic quality, which I loved and which I couldn't produce, but I was happy that such a thing existed in the world. In comparison, my own things seemed to me somewhat destructive, without this beautiful clarity."[12] While it is impossible to determine which body of work came first, this matters less than the shared interests that emerged in the fall of 1966: the intersection of abstraction, painting, and the readymade.[13]

The cloth pictures and the color charts constitute vernacular abstract paintings, created out of readymade colors drawn from an everyday environment and thus more blatantly "ready made" than works painted with oil from a tube or synthetics from a can. While Palermo used predyed commercial fabric, Richter employed industrial charts of color samples. Palermo's cloth pictures stemmed from consumer culture, their colorful combinations drawn from the design palette of the economic miracle, and their color fields and planarity aligning them with popular, marketable American art.[14] At the same time, they are abstract, modernist paintings in the Greenbergian sense: unified and flat, optically stimulating with their even, saturated color fields—"pure," in Richter's description.

Richter's 1966 color charts refer to commodity culture even more overtly and specifically than the cloth pictures: they look like nothing so much as color samples found at a hardware store to help consumers choose paint. Series of closely related tones, gradually or sometimes abruptly shifting in hue, were applied in crisp, impeccable high-gloss lacquer finish. In Richter's hands, paint and color reference commodity products, but they also tautologically reference themselves: paint and color are simply paint and color. In that sense they, like Palermo's cloth pictures, engage a paradigm of modernist self-reflexivity, although as Richter stressed, his color charts "had more to do with pop art" than the cloth pictures. Palermo composed his colors to create unified wholes, while Richter simply, even randomly, found color: "Colors fit together like the right lottery picks."[15]

There are differences in the methods by which Palermo and Richter each balanced pop, commodity, and the readymade on the one hand and modernism, abstraction, and painting on the other. But their intentions are similar: to address the related issues of the failure of the German art world to understand modernist painting—presumably American modernist painting—with its consequent reduction of art to a brand, a hot market item, and the necessity for the purest, most *painted* painting to acknowledge its ultimate destination, the market. That market—a booming Rhine-Ruhr gallery and (soon) art fair scene—opened up a new vocabulary, new sources, and new materials for painting to Palermo and Richter. And that market was no bad thing for two struggling young German artists.

Appropriately, a color chart by Richter first joined a cloth picture at *Demonstrative 67*, the exhibition Friedrich and his artists staged in the exhibition space of the publishing house DuMont to protest the gallery's exclusion from Cologne's Kunstmarkt 67, the first fair for contemporary art (fig. 129). One of Palermo's cloth pictures, probably the untitled white monochrome from 1967 that blended in with the wall, hung next to Richter's *Zehn Grosse Farbtafeln* (Ten Large Color Charts)—displayed not on a wall, as it has been shown ever since, but free standing and partially folded, like a backdrop or divider for a temporary sales area (fig. 130). Kindred spirits joined in a shared "demonstrative" embrace of the

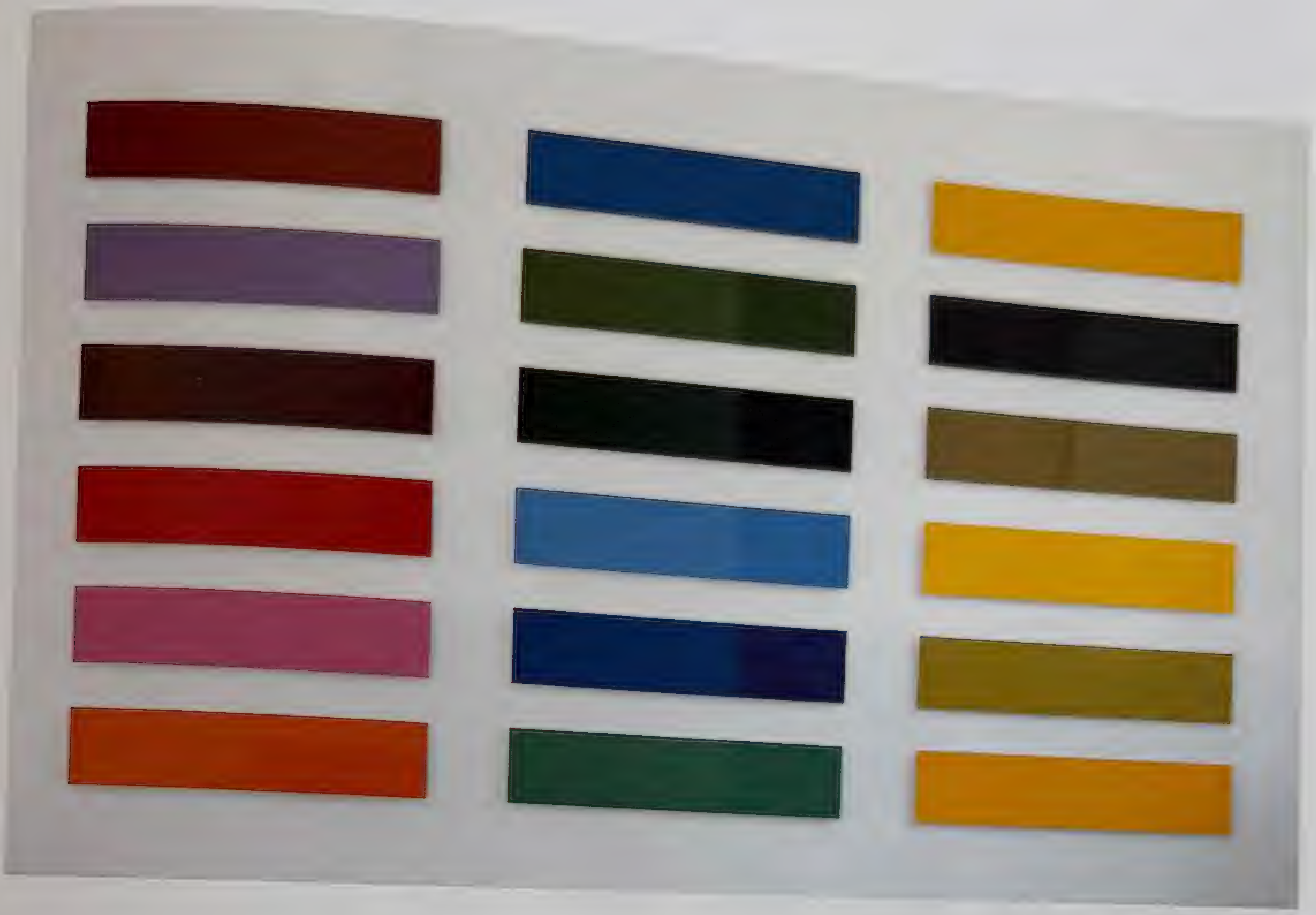


Fig. 128 Gerhard Richter. *Achtzehn Farben (Farbtafeln)* (Eighteen Colors [Color Charts]), 1966, reconstructed 1992. Lacquer on ALU-Cobond, total size: 250 x 450 cm; eighteen panels, each 28 x 130 cm. Collection of Frieder Burda. © 2007 Gerhard Richter. Cologne.

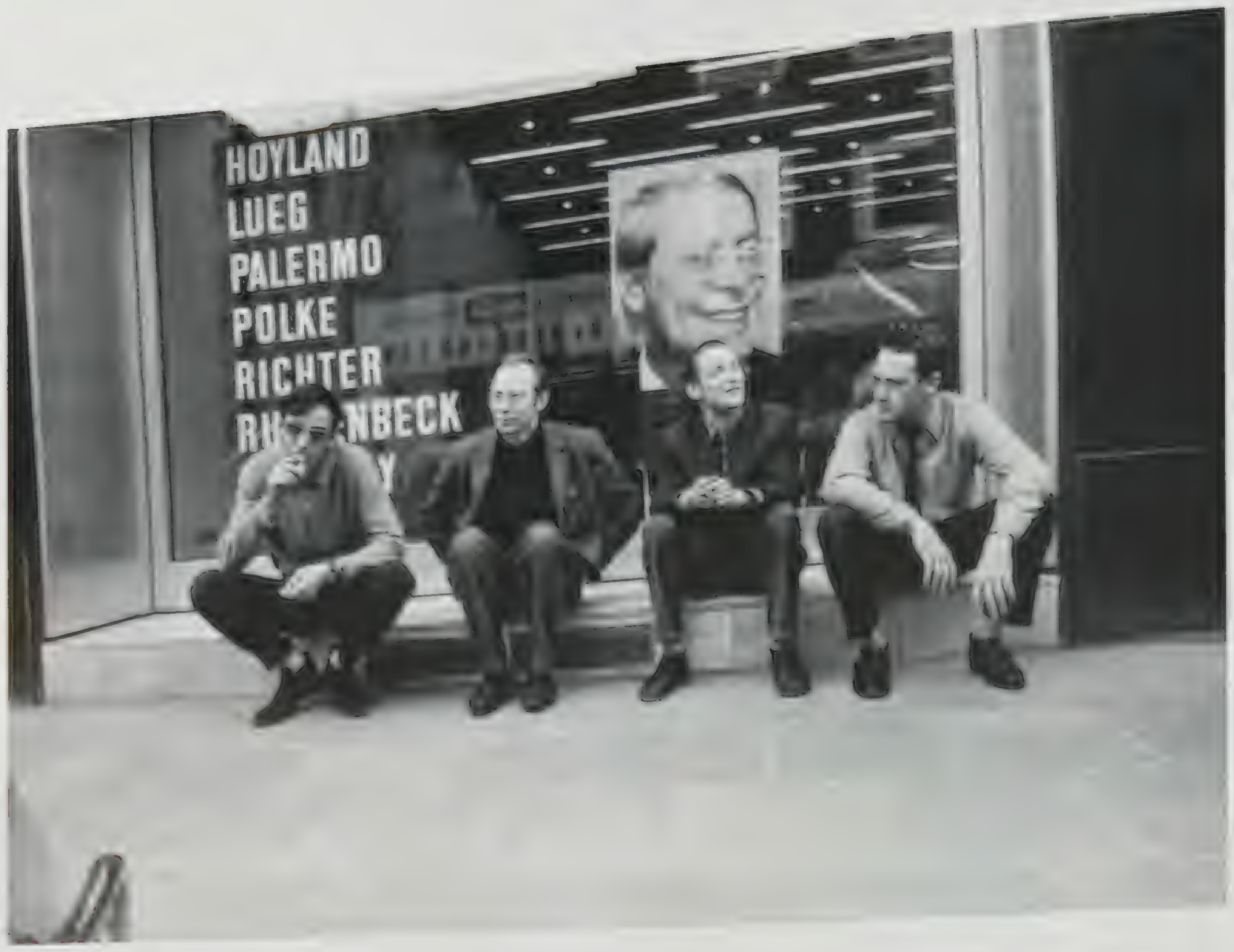
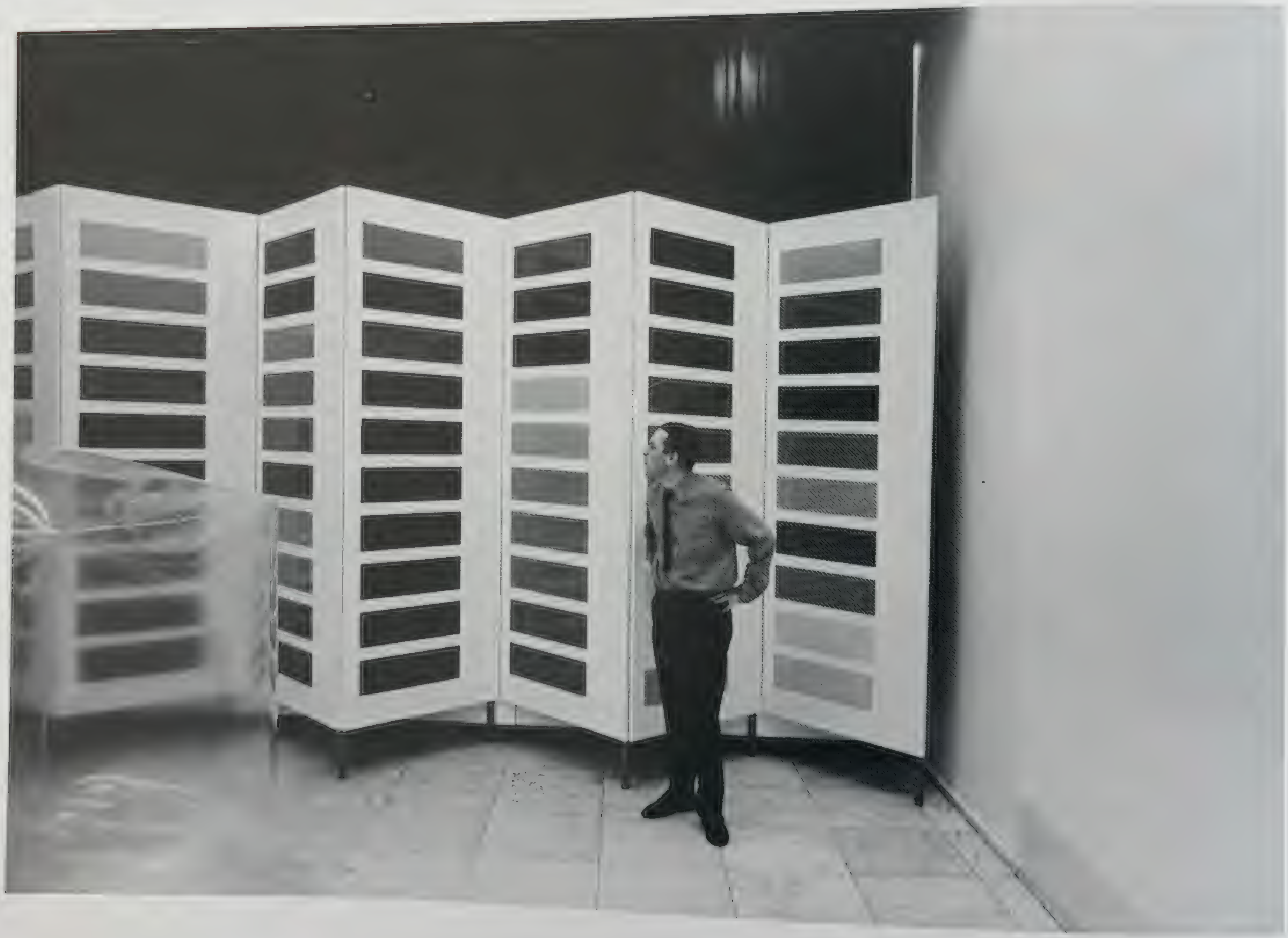


Fig. 129 Konrad Lueg, Sigmar Polke, Palermo, and Gerhard Richter in front of Galerie Heiner Friedrich's Demonstrative exhibition at the DuMont-Verlagshaus, Cologne, 13 September–8 October 1967

Fig. 130 Gerhard Richter standing in front of *Zehn Grosse Farbtafeln* (Ten Large Color Charts), 1966, at the Demonstrative 67 exhibition, 13 September–8 October 1967, DuMont-Verlagshaus, Cologne. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.



market. And if this were not demonstrative enough, Palermo and Richter joined Polke and Lueg to pose outside the storefront space, as if to announce support for their outcast dealer, whose visage looms above them in a blown-up photograph. The setup reads as a loving but comic homage to their champion and perhaps also as a comment on the growing dominance of dealers, whose physical presence and power over the art was felt strongly at the fair. Yet there was more: the still-extant portrait's verso was painted monochrome gray and signed by Lueg, Palermo, Polke, Reiner Ruthenbeck, and Richter, who recalled that he probably painted it and may have had the idea to hang it in the window. The panel should not to be categorized as a work of art per se though—Richter, for one, does not regard it as such. Rather than signing some form of collaborative work, the group instead signed off on a spontaneous expression of solidarity. Nevertheless, the panel neatly figures the mutually beneficial relationship between the artist and his agent.[16]

Palermo and Richter's dialogue between cloth pictures and color charts would expand in subtle, intricate ways over the years. Richter made eighteen color charts in 1966 and five in 1971. He painted the second group in between making two collaborations with Palermo: *Wandmalerei und Skulptur* and an untitled diptych (see figs. 154 and 156).[17] Significantly, Richter's abstract painting between the color charts of 1966 and the color charts of 1971 was limited to gray monochromes and paintings of blown-up photographs that show blurs of paint details, both also related to Palermo, as we shall see.[18] The second series of color charts was exhibited from October to November 1971 at the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremerhaven, which in December mounted the exhibition of Palermo's wall painting in which he painted the lower two-thirds of the gallery's three walls in a mild gray (see fig. 77). Palermo had used gray before, in his *Graue Scheibe* (see fig. 29), but the choice resonates here with Richter's gray monochromes and with the color charts: Palermo chose the tone from a color chart in a nearby paint store and used the color card as the basis for a silkscreen print, a work that preserves the memory of the commercial sample with its even printing and the odd placement of a small gray rectangle on a white expanse of paper.[19] The claustrophobic effect of this wall painting relates not only to environments and the debates about art and politics, as argued earlier, but also to the embattled position of Palermo and Richter as painters.

TRADES AND DEDICATIONS

"I valued him very highly and, in fact, hung watercolors by him in my room," Richter recalled after Palermo's death. "I twice traded watercolors with him." Although both Palermo's and Richter's work reflected on the art market, trading works is too common a practice among artists to justify drawing any conclusions from the fact that the two did so. However, some of the specific works they traded and hung on each other's walls illuminate their emerging professional relationship and eventual collaboration, especially as these apparently occurred at the beginning and ending of the most intense period of the artists' working relationship. Palermo gave Richter a drawing, *Komposition mit 5 Linien* (Composition with Five Lines, 1964; *Wvz* 250), sometime after (although probably not immediately after) it was made, and an untitled watercolor in 1971. The five vertical pencil lines in the former create six white stripes a little more than two centimeters in width formed by the reserved white board background, and the drawing perhaps represented Palermo at his public debut in the 1965 group exhibition *Weiss—Weiss* at Galerie Schmela. This work, effectively a white monochrome, however modest it may appear with its small size and thin lines, joins an art historical tradition of radically abstract art and thus reflected the way Palermo was beginning to encourage Richter to paint abstractly around this time.[20]

Palermo gave Ema Richter *Greensleeves II* in exchange for her labor sometime after she had started sewing for him in 1967 (fig. 131). *Greensleeves* referred to the popular traditional English folk song dating from the sixteenth century, a lover's lament over his rejection by his mistress; it was probably known to jazz fan Palermo through a version John Coltrane recorded on his 1961 album *Africa/Brass.* Palermo made two versions of the work, each juxtaposing two similar but distinct elements, and it accords with the artist's developing relationship with the Richters that he kept one and gave them the other. The motif of two sleeves side by side evoked the hand Ema Richter lent Palermo in making the cloth pictures. As it hung on the couple's wall, it also foreshadowed the collaborations between Palermo and Gerhard Richter, when Palermo's arm would in effect join Richter's.[21]

In 1968 Palermo gave Richter an untitled cloth picture dedicated "für G. Richter," in a direct nod to the color charts (figs. 132, 133).[22] Departing from the horizontal-band structure common to most cloth pictures, an asymmetric patch of yellow on a white ground evokes Richter's color samples, which were arranged on white walls or canvases. Yellow had assumed a special place in Richter's first round of color charts: *Sechs Gelb* (Six Yellows), a canvas featuring six different shades of yellow, was the only monochrome in this series and perhaps the only piece copied exactly from a commercial sample.[23] Palermo dedicated the red counterpart of this cloth picture to his graphic designer friend Anton Konerding, which further suggests that these asymmetric pictures push more directly than the uniform cloth pictures in the direction of pop, the commodity, and the readymade—a development that relates to the overall trend of Palermo's work at that time. The two unusual cloth pictures are part of a series of anomalies dating from late 1968 to early 1969, when Palermo was experimenting with different models of cloth pictures and making the transition from two- to three-stripe compositions. The two more commercially oriented cloth pictures with color fields set asymmetrically into a monochrome field stand in contrast to four small untitled collaged pictures, which move into the opposite direction—

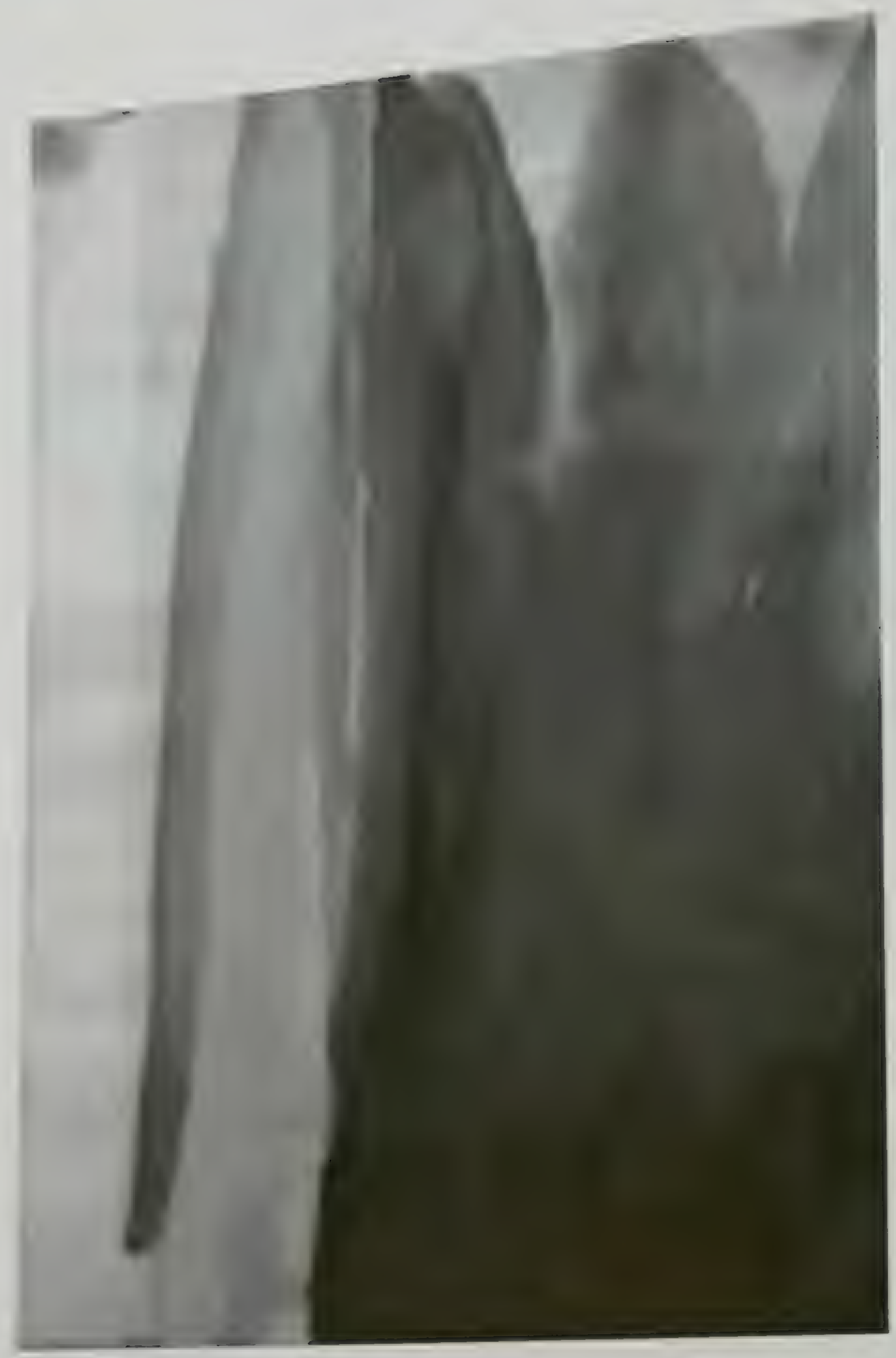
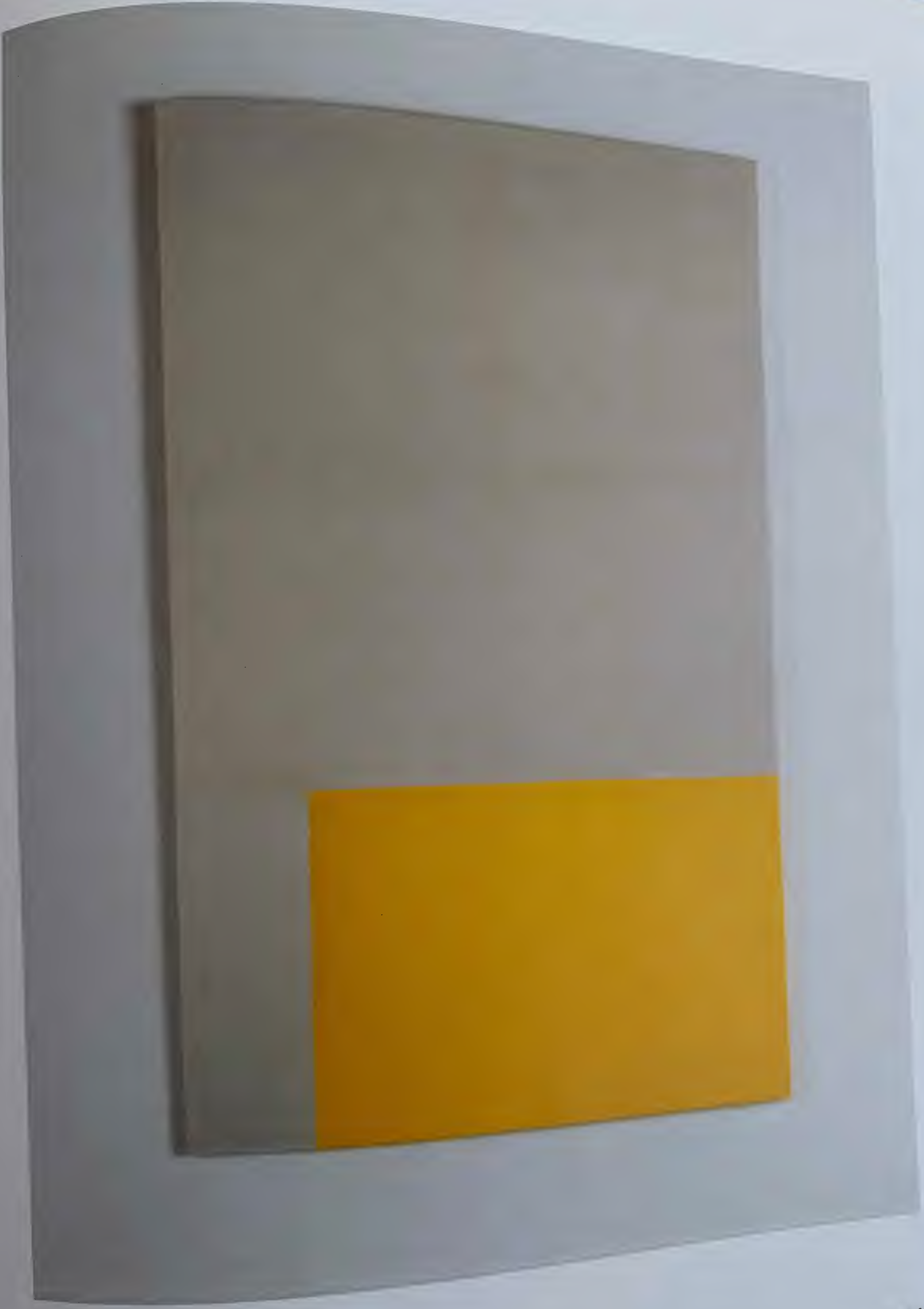


Fig. 131 *Greensleeves II* (Wvz 313), 1966. Watercolor on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm. Collection Ema Richter.

opposite
Fig. 132 *Untitled (für G. Richter)* (for G. Richter) (*Wvz* 86), 1968. Nessel and yellow cotton, 185 x 115 cm. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



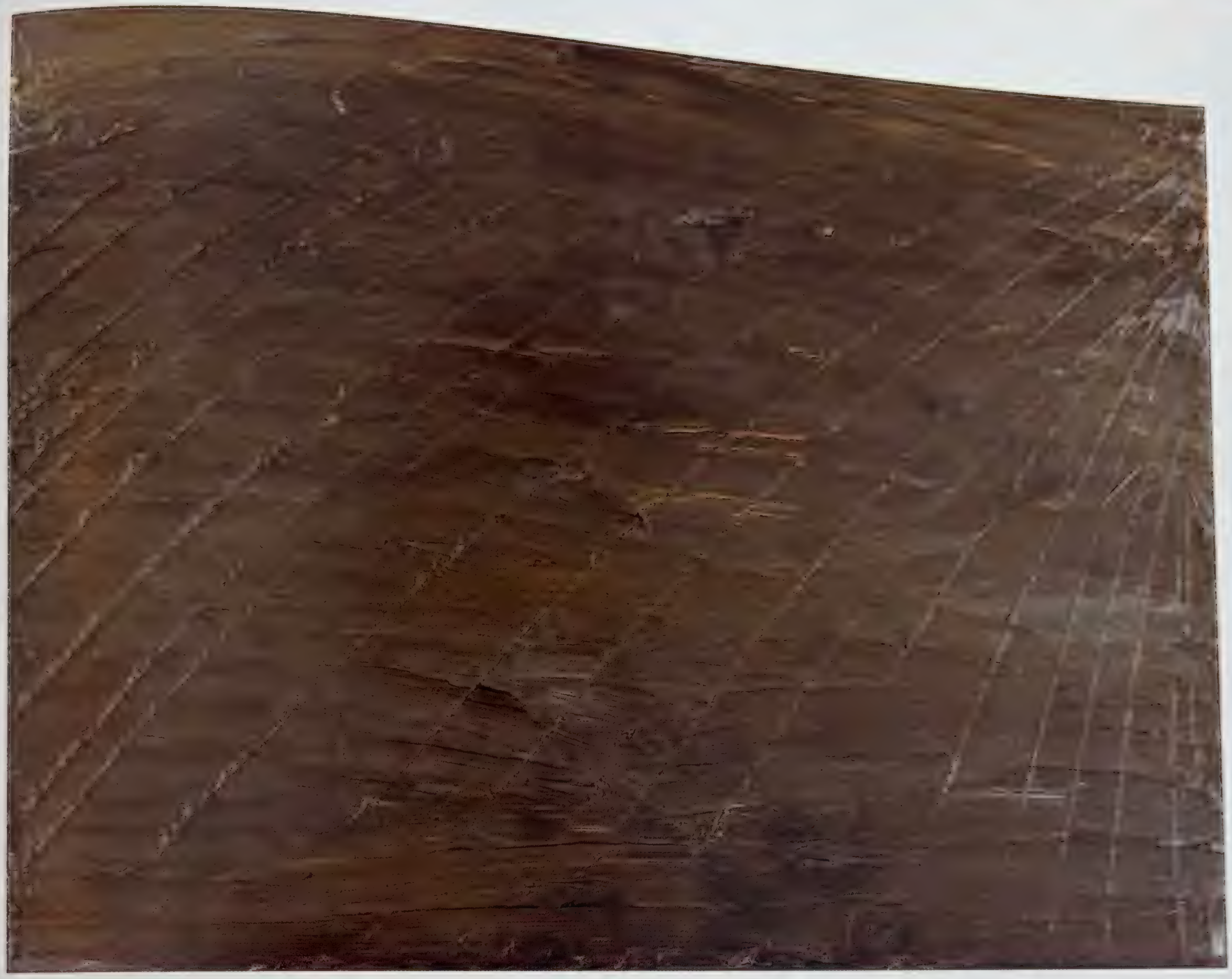


Fig. 134 Gerhard Richter, *Blinki*, 1969. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm. Private collection. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

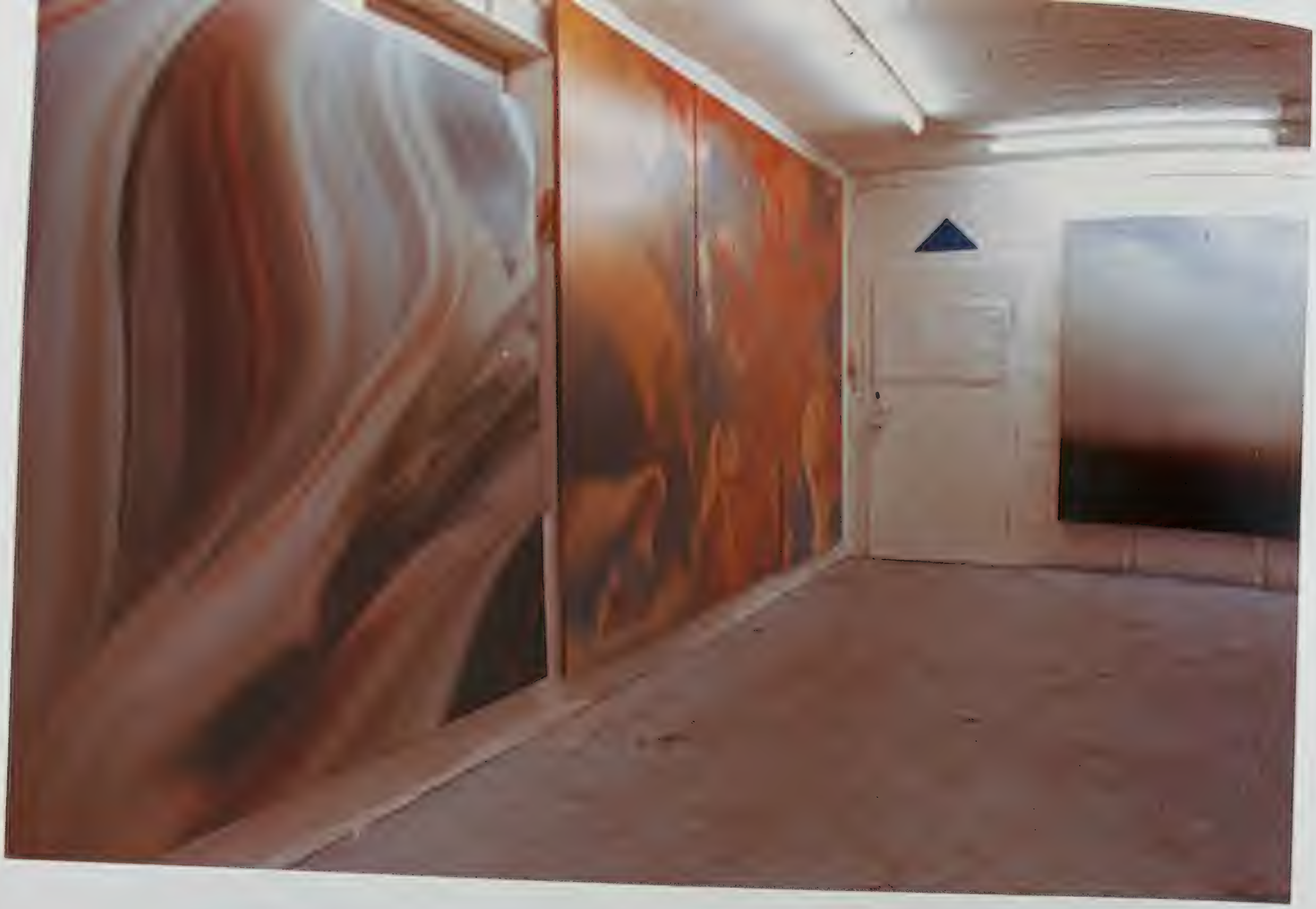


Fig. 135 Far left: Gerhard Richter, *Ausschnitt (Grau Lila)* (Cut Out [Gray, Purple]), and center: Palermo, *Blaues Dreieck* (Blue Triangle), in Richter's studio on Fürstenwall, Düsseldorf, 1969. *Dreieck:* materials and dimensions unknown, no longer extant. *Ausschnitt:* oil on canvas, 200 x 300 cm. Sprengel-museum, Hanover. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

were the times when art was not really relevant enough. Above all painting wasn't socially relevant. Yes, that was bad, and we sometimes felt like reactionaries."[27] Richter describes these as "hard, bad times" when he and Palermo felt they had been "written off" in the climate of conceptual art, which was broadly (if not always correctly) understood as deemphasizing the visual aspects of art and as critical of painting.[28] Palermo "understood" *Blinki* because they shared "this *sense*" about quality and because he and Richter shared a sense of crisis. While he never owned *Blinki,* Palermo did acquire another small gray monochrome dating from the same period, perhaps as a trade for the untitled cloth picture "für G. Richter."[29]

The next Palermo work to go up on Richter's walls was his signature blue triangle. In August 1969 Palermo created the multiple edition kit, and to demonstrate the process he painted his first blue triangle over a door in Richter's studio at Fürstenwall 204 (fig. 135).[30] Palermo's multiple intricately plays with conventional definitions of art and artist, as well as with the growing art market.[31] By choosing to install the prototype triangle over Richter's door, Palermo was alluding not only to his artistic dialogue with his friend over the role of the market but also to his own interest in the role of decoration in abstract painting, a concern that would eventually enter into their collaborations as well.[32]

The second of the two watercolor trades mentioned by Richter came at the height of Palermo and Richter's collaborative period in 1971, when Palermo gave Richter the untitled watercolor, which showed a projection of a room with a yellow monochrome square wall and, possibly, surrounding yellow walls (suggested by the additional color in the dark shading; fig. 136).[33] Probably this watercolor relates to Palermo and Richter's collaboration *Wandmalerei und Skulptur* at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in May 1971, for which Palermo painted all the walls ocher (see fig. 154). It encapsulates some of the themes that Palermo and Richter explored in that and other collaborations: decoration, wall painting, the monochrome, and the color yellow.

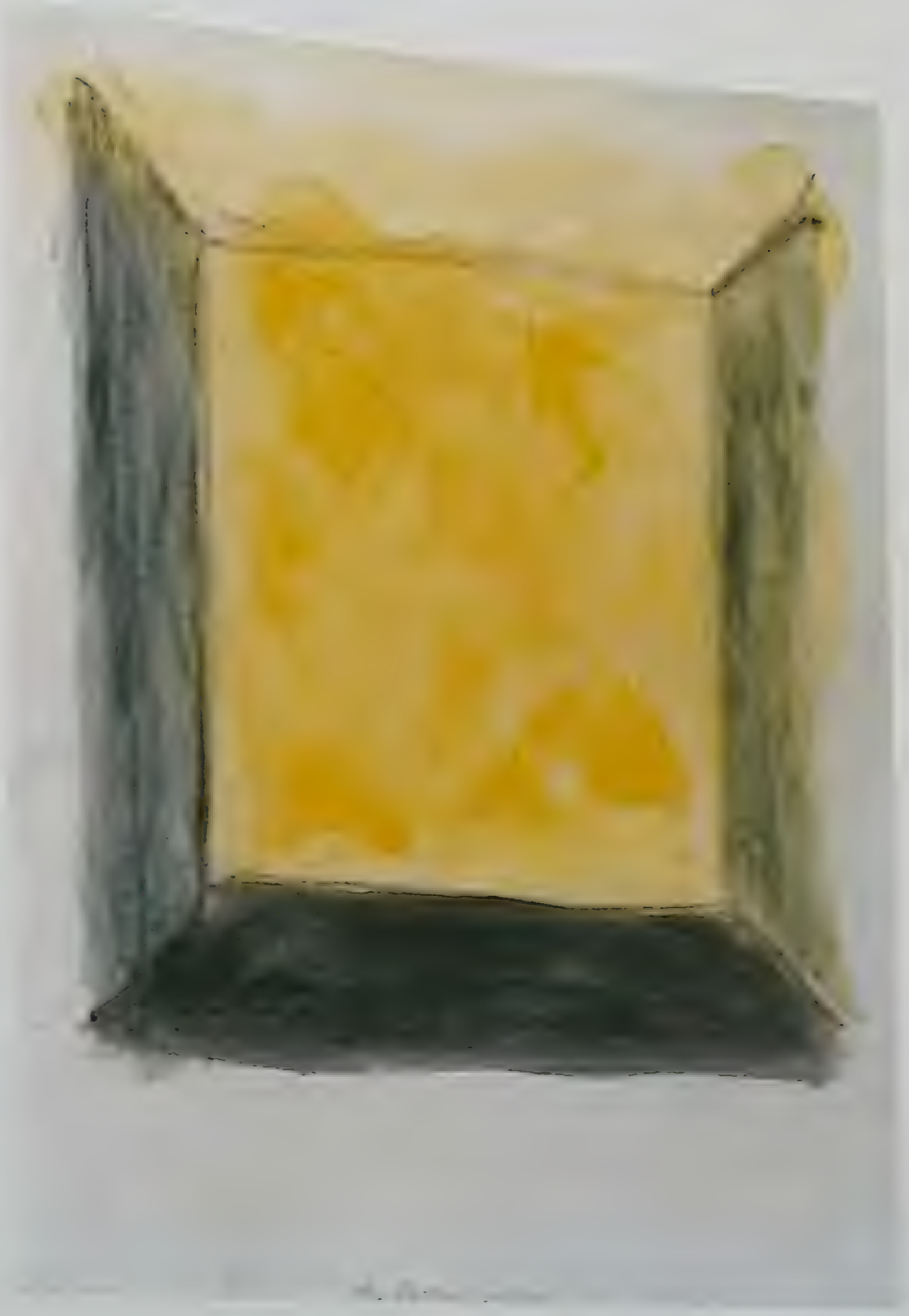


Fig. 136 *Untitled* (*Wvz* 570), 1971. Watercolor and pencil on paper, 25.5 x 15 cm. Private collection, London.

WITH, BESIDE, AGAINST OTHERS

Trades and dedications are common among artists, young artists especially.[34] The sculptor Ulrich Rückriem, Palermo's friend and longtime studio mate, reports giving works as gifts to Palermo and receiving works from him.[35] Palermo also dedicated art to other artists and friends. For example, *Untitled (für Sigmar)* (for Sigmar) of 1965 was perhaps dedicated to Polke; two works *Untitled (für Imi)* (for Imi) of 1966 and 1976 respectively were given to Palermo's other close painter friend, Imi Knoebel; two works, both *Untitled (für Heiner)* (for Heiner), of 1970 and 1971, respectively, and *Weiss, Rot, Schwarz (für Heiner Friedrich)* of 1975 were for Palermo's dealer; two untitled works designated *Untitled (für Thordes)* were for Thordis Moeller; and *Für J. Beuys/ unvollendet*, dated 1964–76 (see fig. 22), honored Palermo's former teacher on the occasion of the 1976 exhibition of work by Beuys's students entitled *mit, neben, gegen* at the Frankfurter Kunstverein. Many of these dedications were reciprocated. Polke's 1968 *Portrait of Palermo* shows his friend's signature triangle turned upside down framed by a sketchy rectangular outline.[36] Following Palermo's death, Knoebel, who remembers him as "the master of color," commemorated his friend with the exhibition *24 Farben—Für Blinky* at Galerie Heiner Friedrich (fig. 137).[37] Beuys turned a photograph taken of himself with Palermo at the *mit, neben, gegen* exhibition into a multiple inscribed *Für Blinky*. (Richter confirms the importance of their relationship: "Beuys liked him, Palermo loved Beuys.")[38] These dedications by and to Palermo are testimony to a man who cultivated many friendships. They are testimony also to the tightly knit Düsseldorf art world during the late sixties and early seventies.

In Düsseldorf everyone knew everyone. The academy, in particular, was divided into small classes of students who worked together under a single teacher for their entire studies. But this small local community grew during the sixties; it became porous and subject to outside pressures. Rival Cologne began attracting more and more galleries with its art fair, forcing Düsseldorf to follow suit in 1968 with Prospect, while American art and artists began flooding the market throughout West Germany. The student body at the academy grew steadily, particularly in the class of Beuys, who opened his classroom to anyone who was interested in late 1968.[39] All artists must strike a balance between defining themselves as independent and as part of a community, between making work that is innovative and work that engages with other art, but that balance was of particular concern to artists coming of age in Düsseldorf's rapidly changing and expanding art world. This balance was on Palermo and Richter's minds, too, and they addressed it in works they made with or for other artists, as well as in the collaborations they embarked on with each other.

Palermo's dedicated work to Beuys for *mit, neben, gegen* has to be seen not only in relation to his objects but also in this broader context, for it charts a process of dissociation while also exploring issues that had been opened up to him by his teacher. Palermo's collaboration with the Danish composer Henning Christiansen for his wall drawing at the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremerhaven and at Galerie Block in Berlin in early 1969 was unique (see fig. 73) in that subsequently he collaborated only with painters from his close circle of friends, rather than with artists like Christiansen who had strong ties to Beuys. But the visual and spatial defamiliarization explored in that work appeared as well in collaborations with Richter. Moreover, Christiansen had been associated with Fluxus, and the collaborative nature of the movement probably inspired Palermo and Richter, who once sat in the audience together watching the Fluxus performances at the *Festival der Neuen Kunst*.

Palermo's 1971 collaboration with his close friend and fellow Beuys student Imi Knoebel, undertaken at the same time he was collaborating with Richter, was more integral to his own practice than the collaboration with Christiansen; indeed, it reflected his newfound independence. Like Richter, Knoebel was a painter, and their shared interest in the

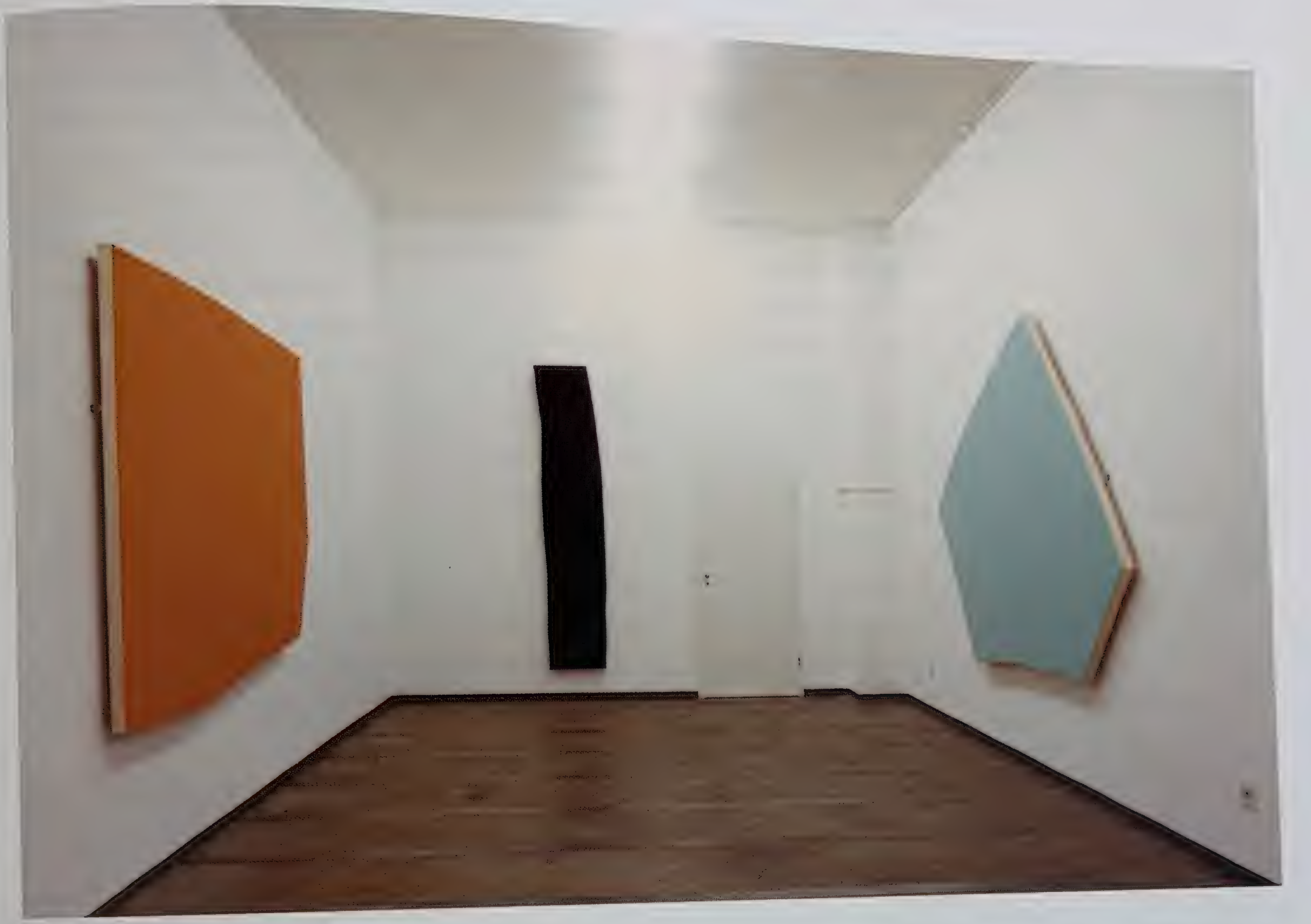


Fig. 137 Imi Knoebel, *24 Farben —Für Blinky* (24 Colors—For Blinky), exhibition at Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Cologne, 14 October–14 November 1977

medium had helped Palermo and Knoebel bond early on, especially in Beuys's class, where they, Norbert Tadeusz, and Jörg Immendorff were the only students interested in painting. Palermo briefly shared a studio with Knoebel around 1969 and consulted with him about installations of his work.[40] Palermo and Knoebel worked along with Immendorff and Giese in Raum 19, a small room next door to the main Beuys class. Raum 19 became the subject of one of Knoebel's best-known installations, developed and first exhibited there in 1968 (fig. 138). That work shares with its subject a sense of mystery and hermeticism (bulky, closed volumes arranged tightly as if stored) combined with a sense of community (the elements are similar in material and shape and arranged as though in a huddle).[41]

Knoebel's *Raum 19* and Palermo's own experience working in the room became reference points for their May 1971 collaboration *Veränderter Raum* at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (figs. 139, 140). Working in one of two adjacent octagonal rooms, the artists erected two walls reaching nearly to the ceiling, creating what was effectively a rectangular central passageway flanked by two identical but inaccessible trapezoidal spaces.[42] The presence of the adjacent unaltered room and the fact that the added walls did not reach the ceiling and had no molding gave visitors a hint of, but never any certainty about, the artistic intervention that had created the two inaccessible side spaces featured so prominently in the schematic plan drawn to document the work. With its two "secret" spaces facing and mirroring each other in a way truly known only to Knoebel and Palermo, *Veränderter Raum* echoes their experience in Raum 19, which had offered its occupants the freedom to create without inhibitions in a space separate from, and inaccessible to, others, thereby creating the possibility for an intense dialogue between minds that were alike (the two secret spaces were identical) yet separate (the two secret spaces were not connected). The work was created for *Gruppenarbeiten* (Group Works), an exhibition that

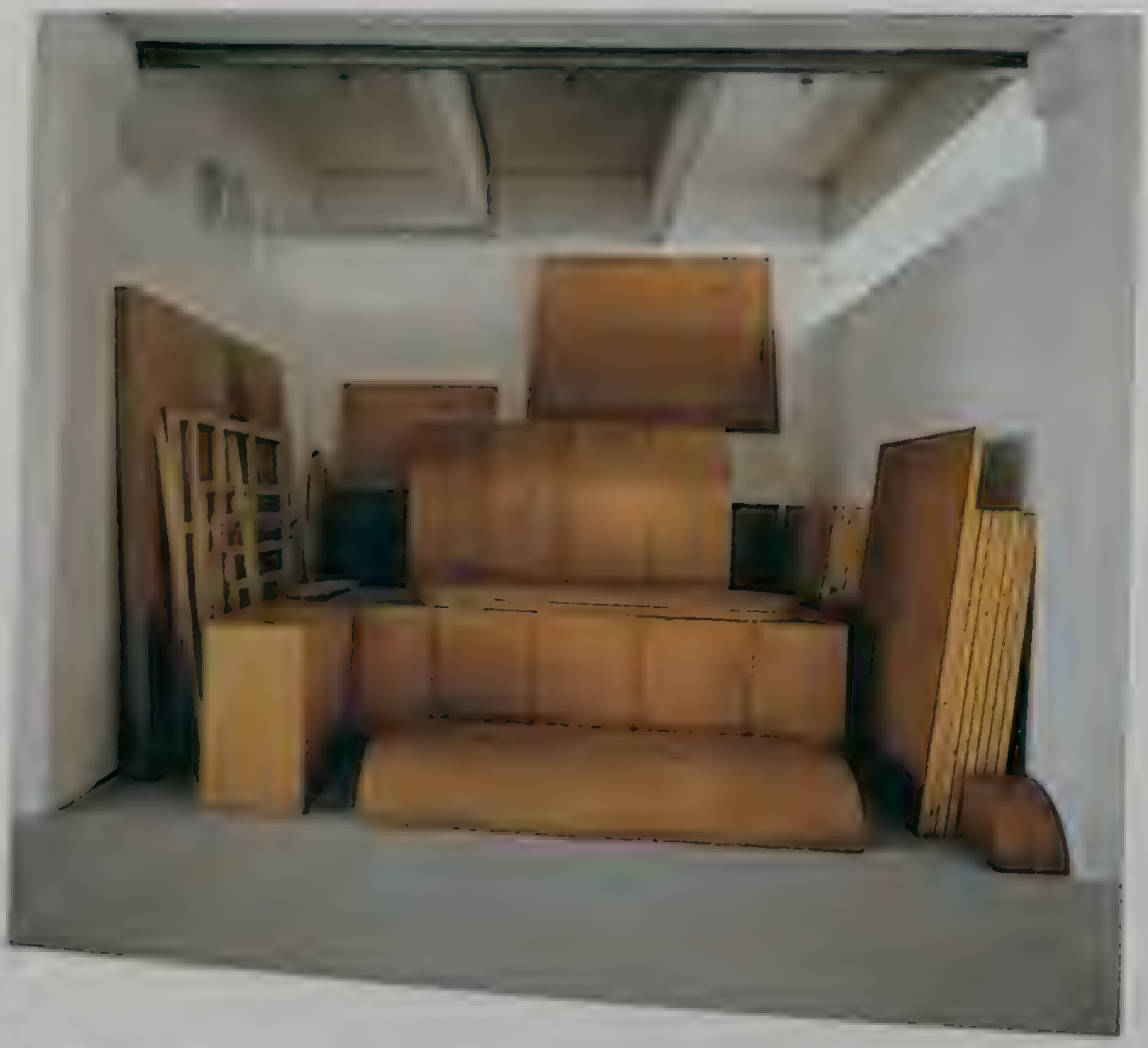


Fig. 138 Imi Knoebel, *Raum 19* (Room 19), 1968, as installed at Dia Center for the Arts, New York, 1987. Seventy-seven parts made of fiberboard, wood, and canvas stretchers in varying dimensions, total size c. 420 x 510 cm. Dia Art Foundation, New York.

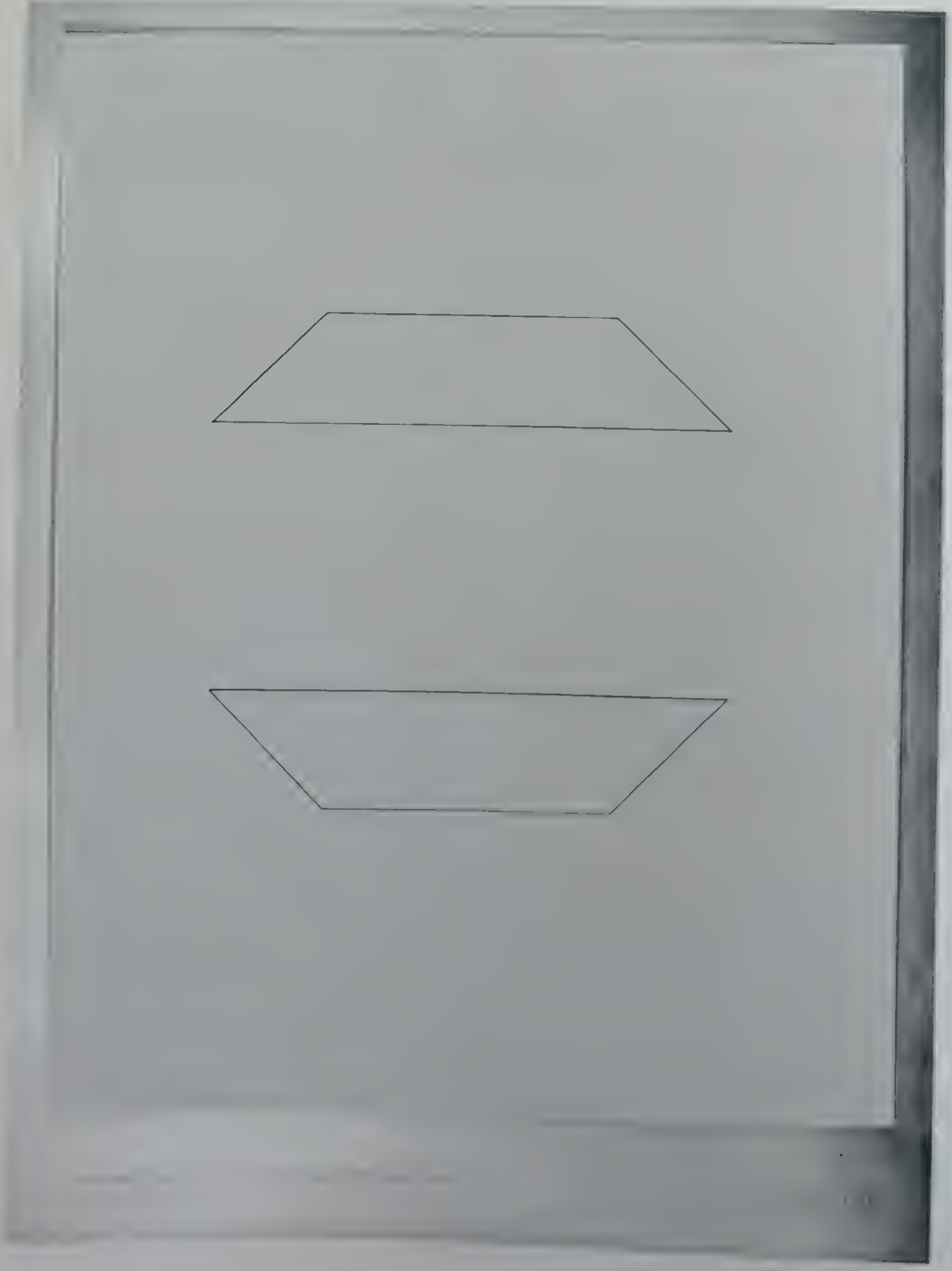


Fig. 139 Palermo and Imi Knoebel, drawing for *Veränderter Raum* (Altered Room), for the exhibition *Gruppenarbeiten 71* at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (*Wvz* 597a), 7 May–6 June 1971. Pencil on cardboard, 72.6 x 55.6 cm. Kunstmuseum Bonn.

displayed entries for a competition of, in contemporary jargon, "collective collaboration on an artistic level," at a moment when, as curator Klaus Gallwitz noted in the catalogue, "artists' groups had formed in various German cities."[43] Palermo and Knoebel embraced the premise but were skeptical about its watered-down execution. Given that their intervention was effectively invisible, it is as if they were saying that their meaningful, intimate experience of collaboration, which had now become fashionable, was not for public display.

By contrast, Richter's collaborations with artists other than Palermo were all about display. Their number and significance extend beyond the scope of this chapter, but selected examples will enable us to understand Richter's elective affinity with Palermo.[44] Richter and Lueg's 1963 *Leben mit Pop. eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus,* discussed in Chapter 3, was staged at a local furniture store and included an "average living room" where the two artists lounged on furniture placed on pedestals (see fig. 95).[45] Between 1966 and 1968 Richter collaborated three times with Polke. For a joint exhibition at Galerie h in Hanover they created a catalogue consisting of a text collage interweaving passages taken from pulp fiction with their own statements, interspersed with two reproductions of paintings and eleven photographs, including ironical presentations of themselves as artists immersed in petit-bourgeois family life. Two prints follow—a pseudo-scientific photograph of a UFO and a picture of a mountain being transformed into a sphere. The silkscreen *Hotel Diana,* made by Richter alone, is based on a photograph of the two artists lounging in beds in a hotel in Antwerp (fig. 141).[46]

Woven through Richter's collaborations with Lueg and Polke is the ironic staging and dismantling of bourgeois conceptions of the artist as unique, heroic creator, endowed with special powers. Yet these stagings also act as protective buffers and betray their creators' anxiety about what ought to replace such outmoded concepts. Whether with Lueg or

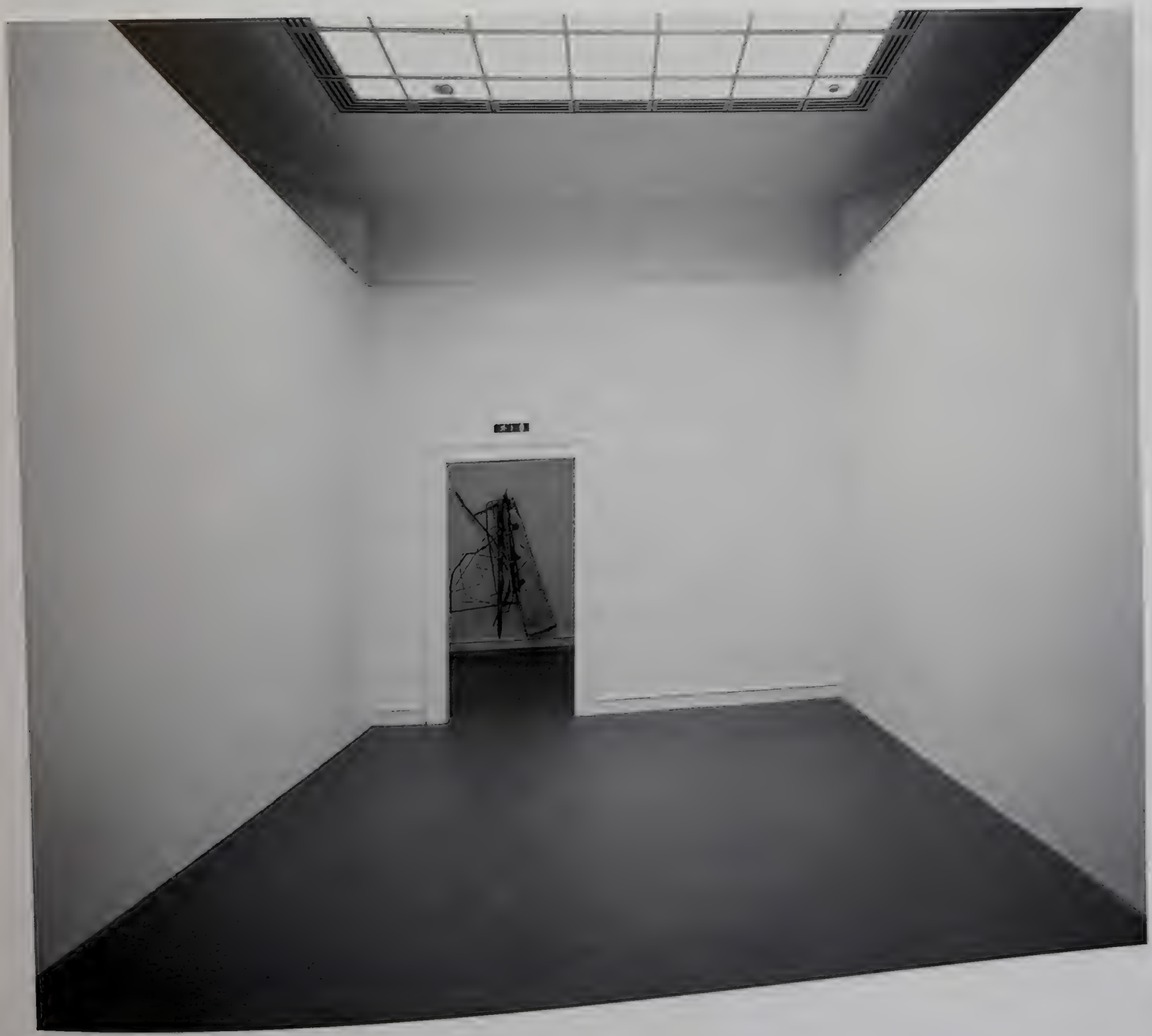


Fig. 140 Palermo and Imi Knoebel, *Veränderter Raum* (Altered Room), for the exhibition *Gruppenarbeiten 71* at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, 7 May–6 June 1971, reconstruction by Knoebel, 1986

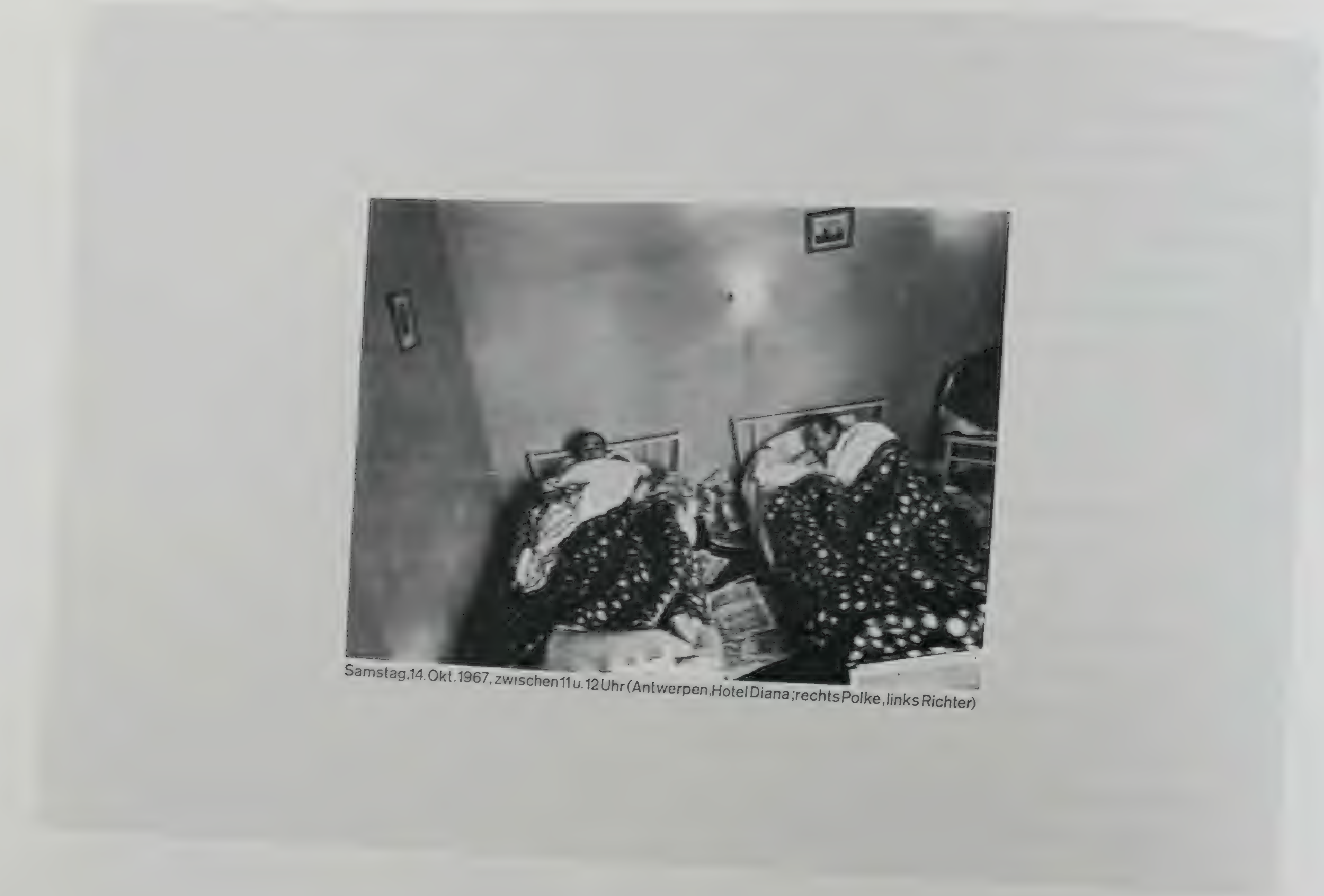

Samstag,14.Okt.1967, zwischen 11 u. 12 Uhr (Antwerpen,Hotel Diana; rechts Polke, links Richter)

Fig. 141 Gerhard Richter, *Hotel Diana*, 1967. Silkscreen in gray layered with yellowish lacquer on white paper, 59.4 x 80 cm. Edition of eighty. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

Polke or later with Palermo, collaboration for Richter was always, it seems, about managing insecurities. In hindsight Richter was skeptical about how successful the capitalist realists—as he, Lueg, and Polke became known—had been in building strength through a group identity. "There were rare and exceptional moments when we were doing a thing together and forming a kind of impromptu community [*Notgemeinschaft*]; the rest of the time we were competing with each other."[47] In his collaborations with Lueg and Polke the balance was off. With Palermo, Richter was able to let down his ironic guard: "I can only say that that's the way it was. Polke drifted away into the psychedelic direction and I into the *classical*. I found support in Gilbert and George where I discovered the same tendencies. And then in Palermo who was also retrieving the classical."[48]

This transition and the separation from Polke haunt two important collaborations with Palermo. The first was a joint 1970 exhibition at Galerie Ernst in Hanover (see figs. 149 and 150) for which Richter contributed two paintings from a series called *Ausschnitte* (Cut Outs), abstractions of close-up views of liquid paint. During the following year, Richter recalls, Polke suggested, "Why don't you go ahead and paint a couple more of these?" It is notable that Polke made this dismissive comment in Richter's first retrospective exhibition, standing not far from Richter and Palermo's first collaborative painting, *Fingerspuren* (Finger Traces), which was hung near some of the *Ausschnitte*. Richter was hurt and felt that Polke had "hit a dangerous nerve."[49] The second was the *Wandmalerei und Skulptur* exhibition at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in May 1971 (see fig. 154). Richter placed two pedestals featuring facing portraits of himself and Palermo into a wall painting by Palermo. The same year, he contributed an offset print of this self-portrait to a special edition of a book about capitalist realism published by René Block. For Block's original *Capitalist Realism* portfolio, dating from three years earlier, Richter had chosen the *Hotel Diana* silkscreen featuring Polke and himself. Block, following Polke, bitterly mocked the implied transformation, writing in the introduction to the 1971 book that "Richter fled into the beaux arts (I don't want to explain here why)."[50] Palermo had taken Polke's place at Richter's side.

PRELUDE TO COLLABORATION, 1970

Exhibitions in the early months of 1970 brought Richter and Palermo closer together and helped lead to their first collaboration later that year. In February they exhibited together at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels along with Günther Uecker. Richter showed a series of seascapes, Palermo a new variation of his signature blue triangle as a full-scale wall painting in a series (see fig. 33). For the exhibition brochure Palermo submitted photographs of his execution of the blue triangle multiple in Richter's studio, a public indication as much of his connection to Richter as of their shared interest in the market.[51] Palermo and Richter were engaging with some of the most traditional, popular, and indeed marketable art practices—landscape painting (Richter) and decorative wall painting (Palermo). In that sense their art was out of sync with the developing climate of conceptual art and institutional critique, almost as if they were responding to the demonstration staged in the same building in May 1968 by the Free Association. That group of artists, which included Marcel Broodthaers, had occupied the Palais des Beaux-Arts to protest "the commercialization of all forms of art considered as objects of consumption."[52]

Palermo's and Richter's contributions at the Brussels exhibition were apparently not conceived jointly.[53] The same is true of their simultaneous exhibitions in the two spaces of the Galerie Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf two months later. In Fischer's original space on Neubrückstrasse, Palermo showed his wall painting *Treppenhaus* (Staircase), the to-scale copy of the olive-gray dado in the staircase of his apartment building (see fig. 89), while for the inaugural exhibition of Fischer's new space on Andreasstrasse, Richter exhibited thirty-five recent small paintings, largely gray monochromes. Richter's biographer Dietmar Elger comments on the personal implications: "The two friends [Richter and Fischer, formerly Lueg] had gone separate ways in recent years, since Fischer had changed professions to become a dealer. Now they moved toward a tentative reconciliation. . . . The simultaneous presentation with Blinky Palermo was no accident. . . . Their friendship had grown closer in recent years."[54]

On 10 May, within a week of the closing of Palermo's and Richter's Fischer shows, Gilbert Proesch and George Passmore, known as Gilbert and George, performed one of their living sculptures at Fischer's Andreasstrasse space. Following several London performances the previous year, the two British artists were touring Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Among the first works they performed on tour were the singing sculpture *Underneath the Arches* at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf on 14 February for the exhibition *between 4* and *Posing Piece* at Fischer's gallery (fig. 142). They gave another solo show at Galerie Heiner Friedrich's new Cologne space in mid-October.[55] Richter and Lueg's *Leben mit Pop* was an important precedent for the two British artists, although their self-display as art became far better known. Gilbert and George's demeanor and delivery, however, were strikingly serious and carefully planned, giving their repeated performances an authenticity that ran counter to Richter and Lueg's onetime, spontaneous, tongue-in-cheek happening. That difference must have struck Richter, who had noticed "the same tendencies" in Gilbert and George's work found in his own and that of Palermo. Elsewhere he elaborated: "I liked them as outsiders above all. At that time, Minimal, Land and Conceptual Art were dominant. I valued all that, though I had very little to do with it. With Gilbert & George, too, I liked the very nostalgic side. They were the first people who liked my landscapes. I think what impressed me the most was the way they took their own independence as a matter of course."[56] Through Fischer, Richter met the duo, who wanted him to paint their portrait. Plans were made but eventually abandoned for a preparatory photo shoot in the Alps. Richter eventually painted a series of portraits in

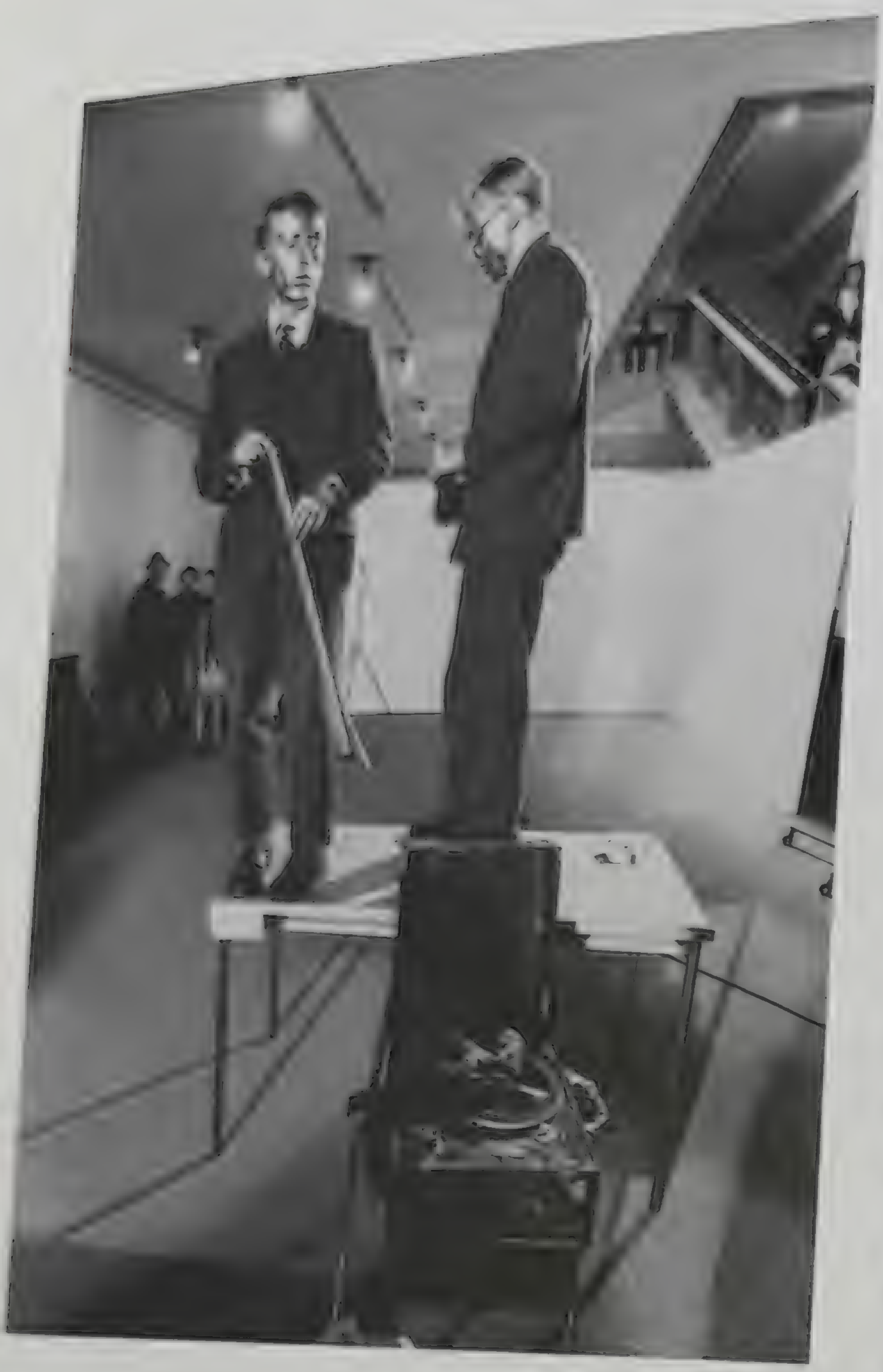


Fig. 142 Gilbert and George, *Underneath the Arches*, 1970, performance at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 14 February 1970. © 2007 Gilbert & George.

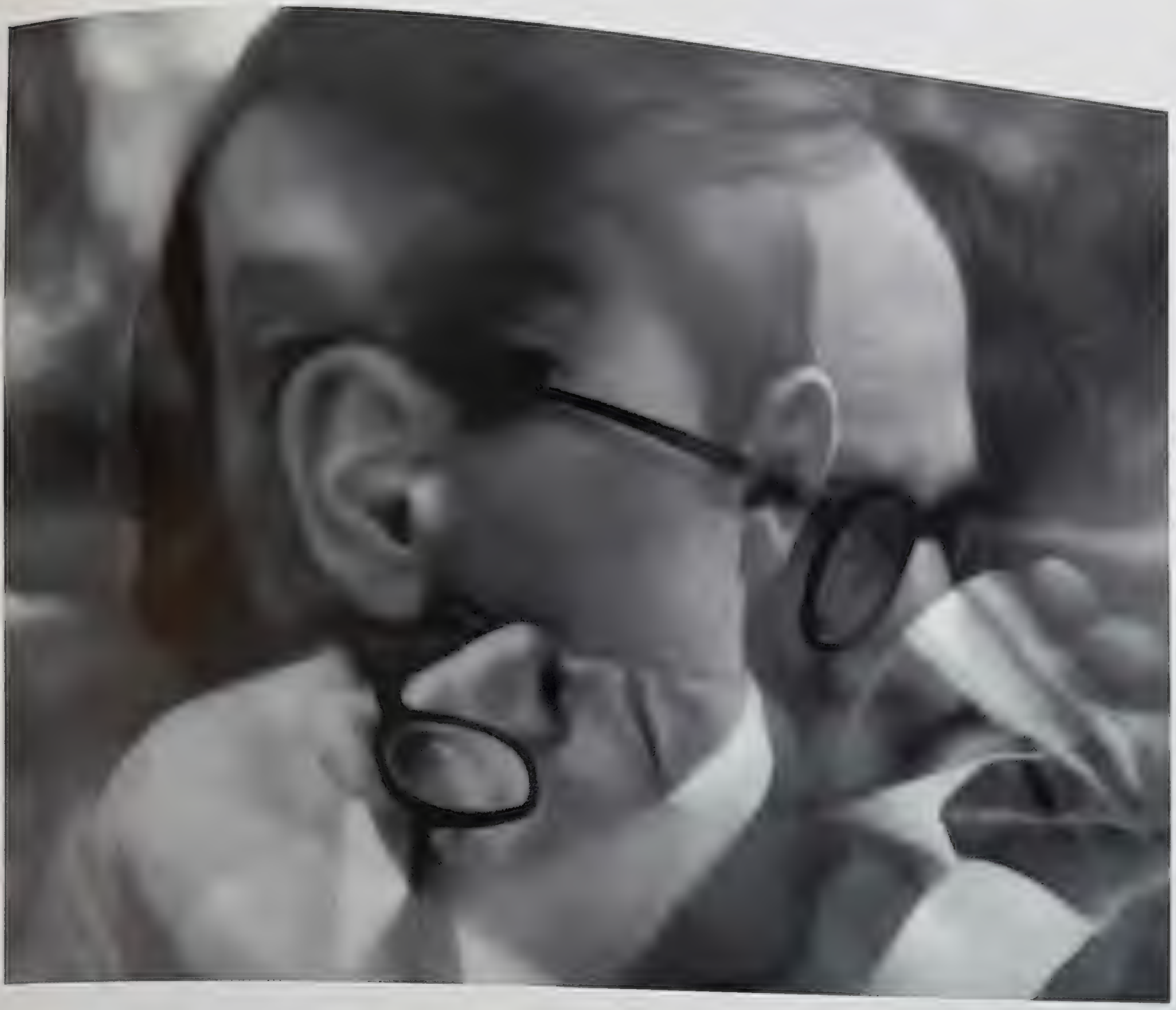


Fig. 143 Gerhard Richter, *Gilbert and George*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm. Location unknown. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

1975 based on double exposures (fig. 143).[57] Gilbert and George attended the 13 February opening of Palermo's exhibition at Cologne's Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, and Palermo in turn came to see their singing sculpture performance at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf the following day; but we do not know what he thought of their art.[58] In addition to further encouraging Palermo and Richter to engage in traditional modes of art making, Gilbert and George perhaps reinforced, or even suggested in the first place, the idea of collaboration.

The groundwork had been laid. Since 1966 Palermo and Richter had engaged in an artistic dialogue about painting, abstraction, and the world of design and commodities, and they had traded and dedicated works to each other. In 1970 the two artists' works appeared side by side in exhibitions, and they themselves had occasionally worked in the same studio after Palermo's studio in Sternstrasse was torn down in 1969. (While looking for a new space, he shared studios with several friends, including Richter, Knoebel, and Klaus Rinke.) Even after Palermo found a new, larger studio in nearby Mönchengladbach, where rents were still low, he used it only intermittently until late 1971. Instead he continued to spend time in the studios of his friends and in an additional small space he had sublet from Rinke at Fürstenwall 163, which was a few houses down from Richter before Richter moved to a new, larger space on Harkortstrasse.[59] During Palermo's time in Richter's studio, the two artists took photographs of each other, posing casually sitting backward on a chair in a mysterious, misty setting that can be identified as one of Richter's 1970 *Wolke* (Cloud) paintings (fig. 144).[60] It looks like Palermo and Richter are simply taking a break, and Richter confirmed that the photographs should not be considered a work of art. But their play of abstraction and found representation, their use of a work of art as a backdrop and of painting as a frame can be found throughout Palermo and Richter's later collaborations.[61]

The artists' physical proximity led to collaboration, probably just after the Brussels exhibition and just before the "cloud photographs." As Richter explained: "The collaborative paintings came about during a time when we were together a lot, when he some-

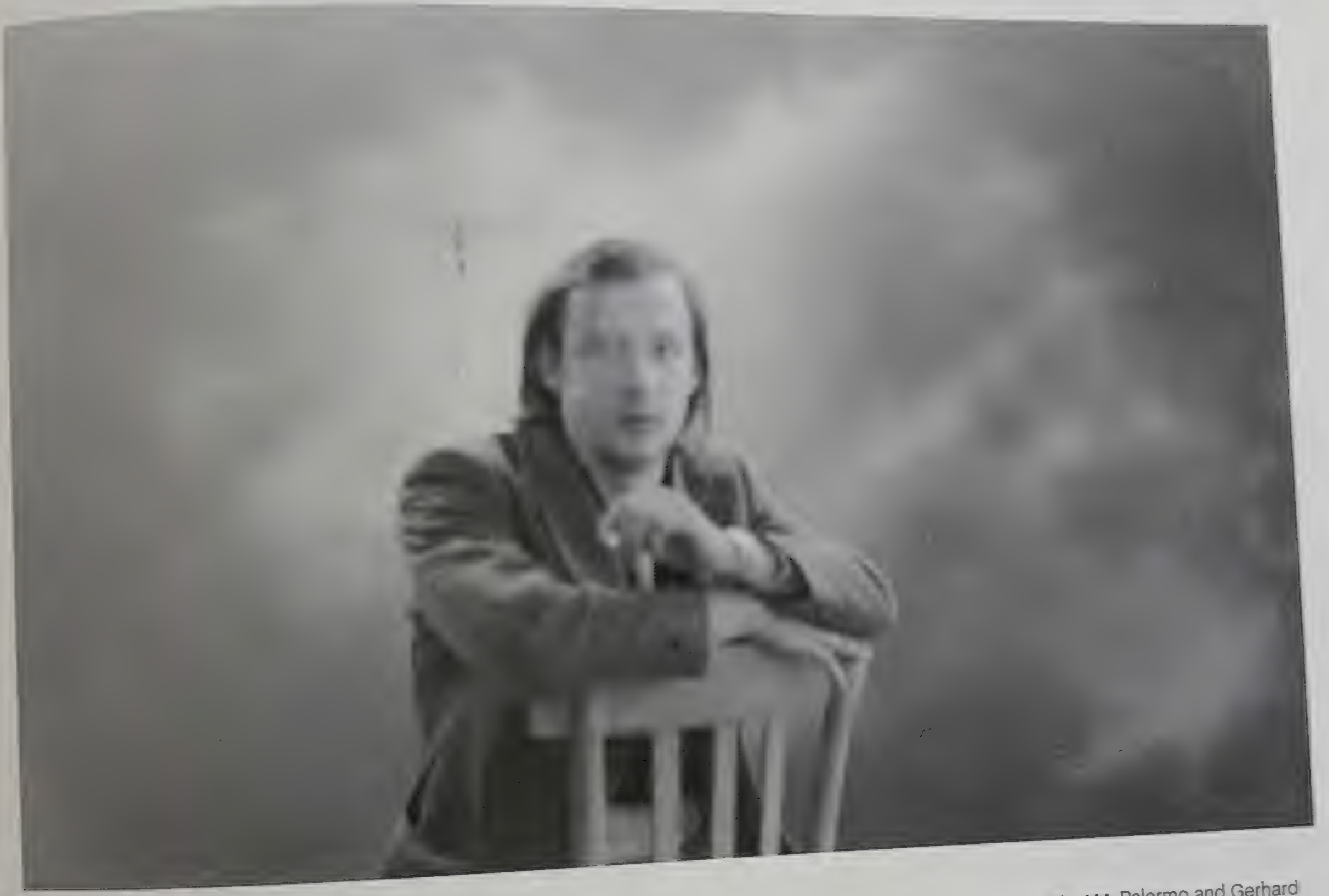


Fig. 144 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, *Untitled*, c. 1970. Richter (pictured opposite) photographed by Palermo and Palermo photographed by Richter, both in front of Richter's *Wolke* (Cloud). © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

times worked in my studio. I don't remember this exactly. The first time there were two panels standing there, and I started to paint one gray, and said to Palermo, 'Join in, make one too.' That was quite pretty. We both distributed this gray paint on the canvas with our fingers. The panels were two by two meters in size. They were exhibited later, and then they broke. That's how it started."[62] Richter probably remembers the size of what became known as *Fingerspuren* because it was significant. In the now destroyed work, two 200-by-100-centimeter panels, one painted by Richter and one by Palermo, were joined to form a square (fig. 145). The perfect form created by joining two parts would seem to embody the Romantic view of collaboration, as imagined by Schlegel in the *Athenaeum* fragments: "Perhaps there would be a birth of a whole new era of the sciences and arts if symphilosophy and sympoetry became so universal and heartfelt that it would no longer be anything extraordinary for several complementary minds to create communal works of art. One is often struck by the idea that two minds really belong together, like divided halves that can realize their full potential only when joined."[63] Several of Palermo and Richter's collaborations would involve the joining of two elements, but they never blended into the perfect whole envisioned by Schlegel. A reproduction of *Fingerspuren* shows that the perfect form of the square enclosed two deceptively similar halves whose subtle differences illuminate the beginning of Richter and Palermo's collaborative process. Richter's restrained marks on the right panel create an even, finely textured surface that accentuates Palermo's more varied, at times messier marks on the left, exemplified by sets of uninterrupted long lines near the bottom left corner and in the upper right.

It is tempting to see these different finger traces as a manifestation of what many believe were differences in the artists' temperaments: Richter's more calculated, meticulous manner of painting versus Palermo's more process-oriented practice. But although Richter had once been struck by how "awkward" Palermo was with his hands, he also disagreed with the pervasive assessment that Palermo's work was more "processual" than his.[64] It seems more likely that Palermo's disarrayed, isolated marks are gestures of self-assertion as he and Richter negotiated a way to work together. At Richter's urging, Palermo had "joined" in Richter's art making, within parameters set up by Richter. While he was almost as interested in gray as Richter—he painted *Graue Scheibe* in 1966, for example—the gray monochrome panel was Richter's domain and originated from Richter's series of gray monochrome paintings. Likewise, the application of paint with fingers was Richter's technique, established as early as the 1968 *Schlieren* (Cords, or Striations).[65] The completed work stayed within Richter's realm. *Fingerspuren* was a near collaboration, a start to Palermo and Richter's joint work.

Their next project, for the Munich Olympics of 1972, was never realized, for the organizing committee rejected the proposals they submitted in October 1970.[66] The Munich Olympics were perceived as an opportunity for Germans to show how much they had changed since Germany last hosted the Games, in 1936, when Hitler had used them to showcase National Socialism, as Leni Riefenstahl's film *Olympia* (1936) arguably attests. Art was to play an important role in creating this new image. A "festival of the Muses and of Sport" was envisioned in which "art is engaged in and inspired by the design of the Olympic buildings, its permeation with art objects of all kinds, the Olympic poster competitions and several graphic and photographic tasks."[67] Several artists represented by Heiner Friedrich's gallery proposed site-specific works for the complex, whose construction began in 1969 on the Oberwiesenfeld, four kilometers outside the city center. "Flavin proposed neon lights for a corridor," Moeller remembers, "Andre some kind of mound with a grid on top, De Maria also came up with something. None of them were realized." De Maria's project to drill a three-meter wide shaft into the prominent hill on the Olympic grounds is probably the best-known of these abortive plans because it came closest to being realized.[68] Palermo and Richter's project concerned the Sporthalle (Sport

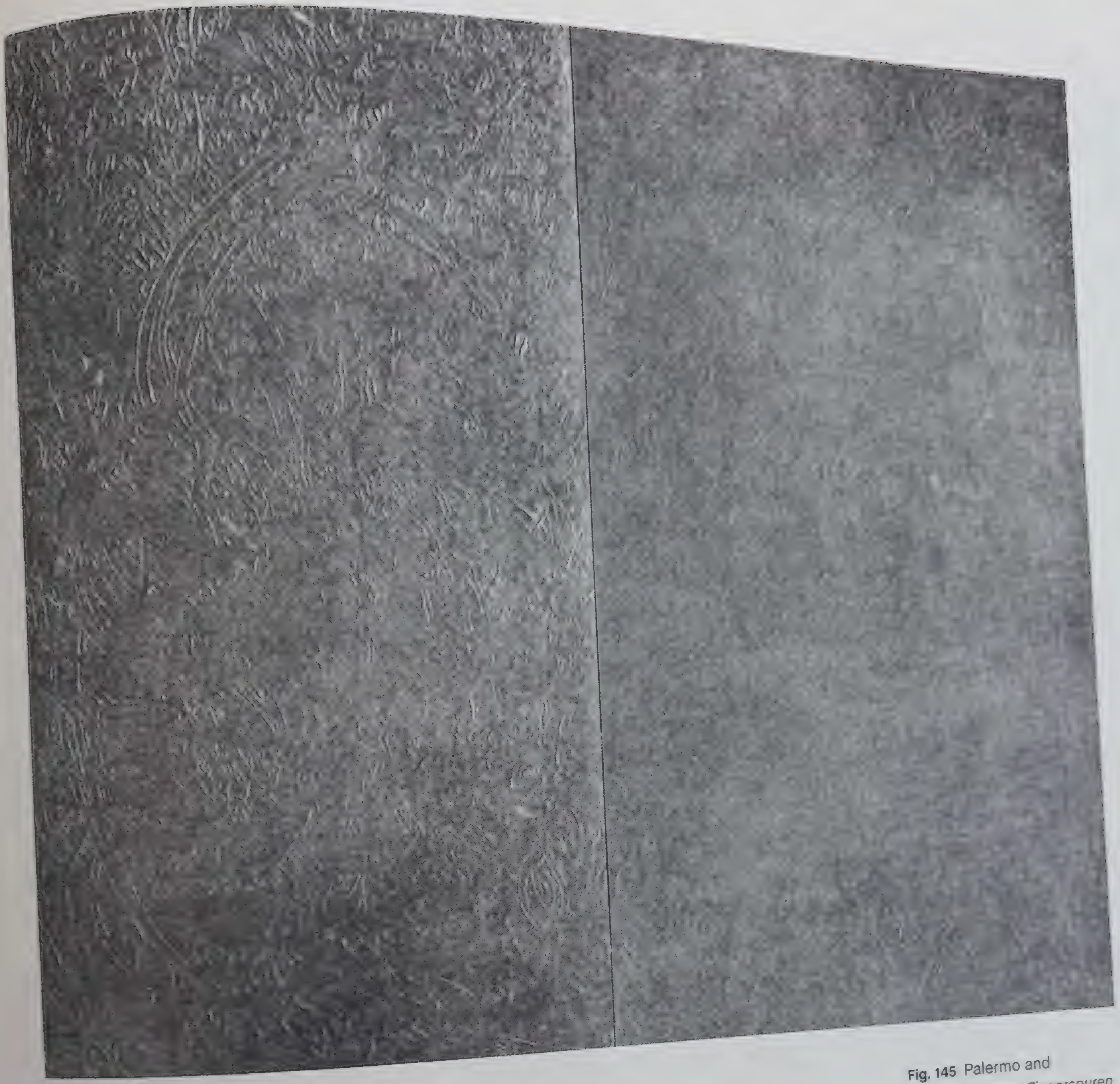


Fig. 145 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, *Fingerspuren* (Finger Traces) (destroyed), 1970. Oil on unknown support, 200 x 200 cm. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

Hall) and the Schwimmhalle (Swim Hall). Both buildings, still in use today, are prominently located, connected to the stadium by what came to be known as "the largest roof in the world" (fig. 146). The architect, Günther Behnisch, and his team at Behnisch and Partner had won the national competition in 1967 largely because of the giant, tentlike roof made of transparent Plexiglas and the hilly landscape in which they positioned the buildings, features that appealed to television stations, which had lobbied for picture-perfect backgrounds and optimal conditions for color broadcasting.[69]

Palermo and Richter proposed to dye the 1,350 windows of the facade of the Sporthalle twenty-seven different colors, fifty panes of each color, distributed randomly, while they proposed that the Schwimmhalle have ten stripes in different dimensions and colors, probably meant to run around its circumference—the proposal explained that "the endless bands are functional and beautiful" (figs. 147, 148). While Richter insists on the collaborative nature of the proposals, he does acknowledge that the initial ideas for the Sporthalle were his and the ones for the Schwimmhalle Palermo's.[70] Richter independently proposed that "African landscape panoramas in the form of gigantic ektachromes" be projected onto a ninety-four-meters-long wall inside the pool building.[71] Although sketchy, the collaborative proposals synthesize Palermo and Richter's parallel but separate explorations of color in 1966 in the cloth pictures and color charts. Modernist autonomous color—monochrome, dyed and one with the ground, intense and luminous—meets worldly color, applied to a functional architectural design, random and meaningless.

The dyed glass central to Palermo and Richter's proposal would have been semi-transparent (or semi-opaque, depending on one's viewpoint). Palermo and Richter had independently pursued this effect in previous work: Palermo's 1966 *Fensterkreuz II* (Window Cross II; Wvz 308), 1967 *Entwurf für ein Fenster* (Proposal for a Window, *Wvz* 48), 1969 wall painting *6 Fenster nach innen* (Six Windows to the Inside), and 1969 *Untitled,* which included a triangle made of mirrored glass (see fig. 1); Richter's 1967 installation *4 Glasscheiben* (Four Glass Panes) and a 1968 series of oil paintings with titles like *Fenster* (Window), *Fenstergitter* (Window Grid), or *Schattenbild* (Shadow Picture).[72] Richter noted about these works that perhaps they "are metaphors of despair, prompted by the dilemma that our sense of sight causes us to apprehend things, but at the same time restricts and partly precludes our apprehension of reality." (He once concisely described *4 Glasscheiben* as "seeing everything comprehending nothing.")[73] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh has elaborated on this tension, showing, among other things, how windows and glass in Richter's 2002 *8 Grau* (Eight Gray) and related previous works combine the mysterious effects associated with these materials in Romanticism with their promise of transparency in modernism.[74]

In the context of the Munich Olympics, Palermo and Richter's experimentation with opacity and transparency would clearly interfere with the needs of the television broadcasters, but it had more spe-

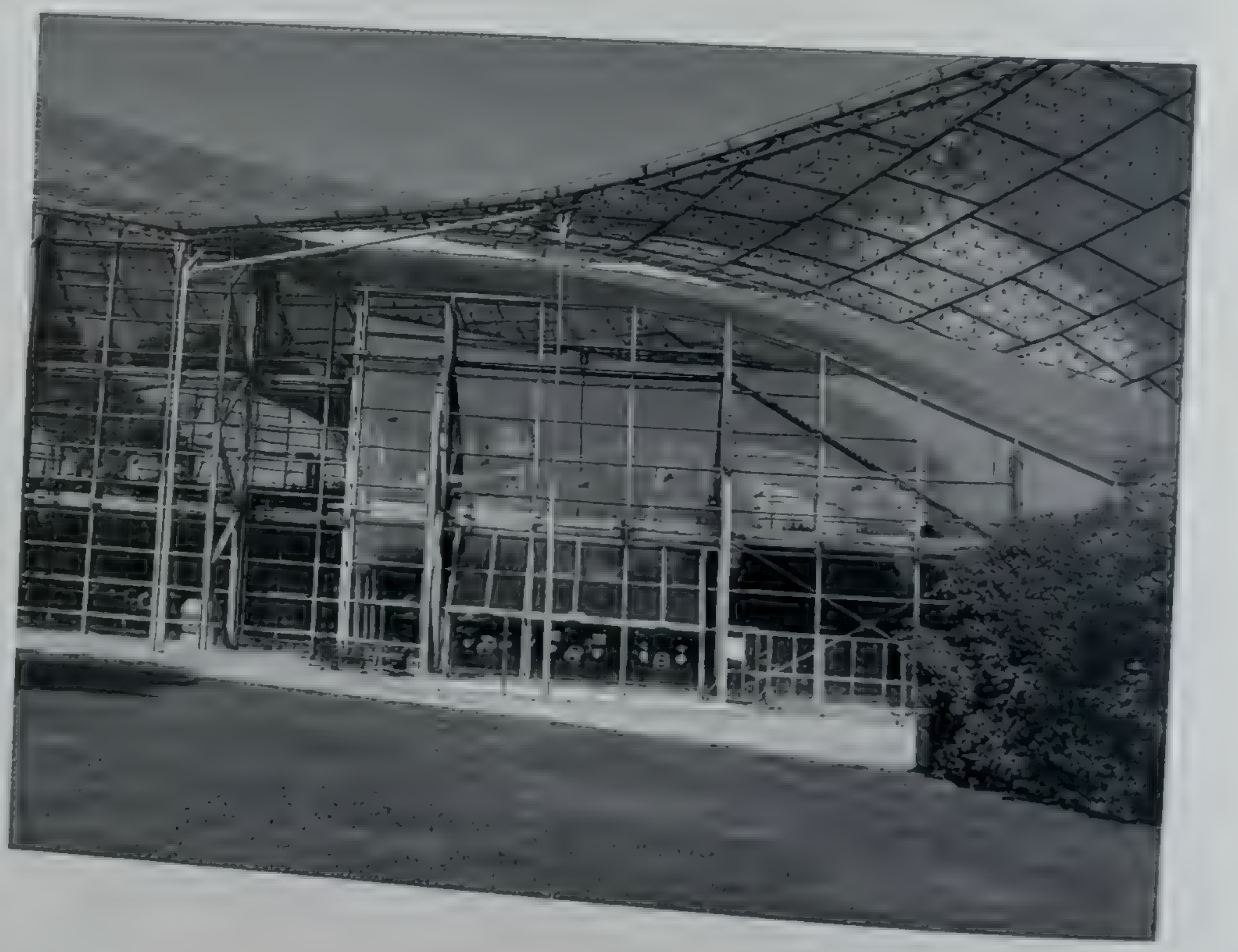
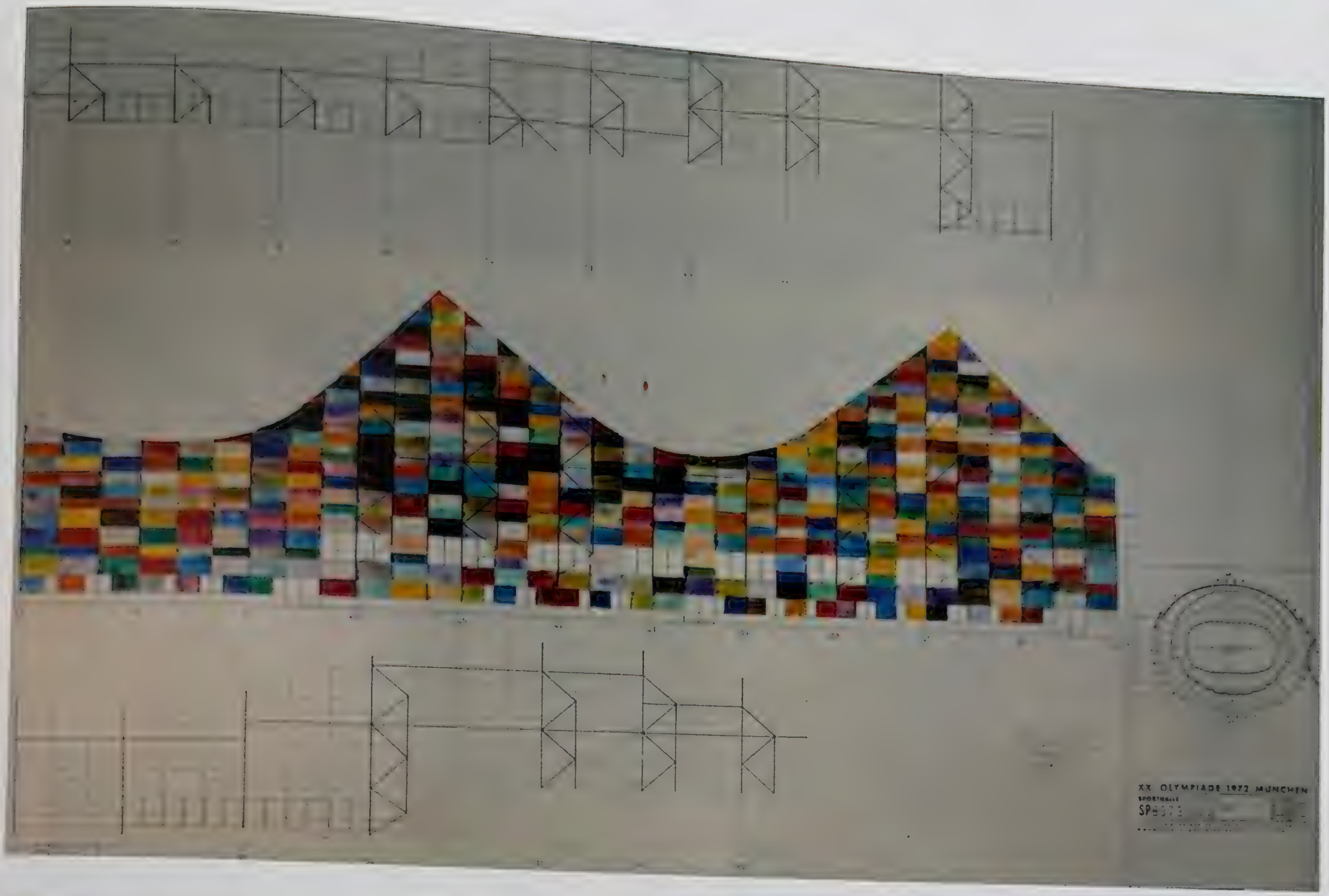


Fig. 146 Behnisch and Partner, Schwimmhalle (Swim Hall), Munich, 1972, photographed 2006



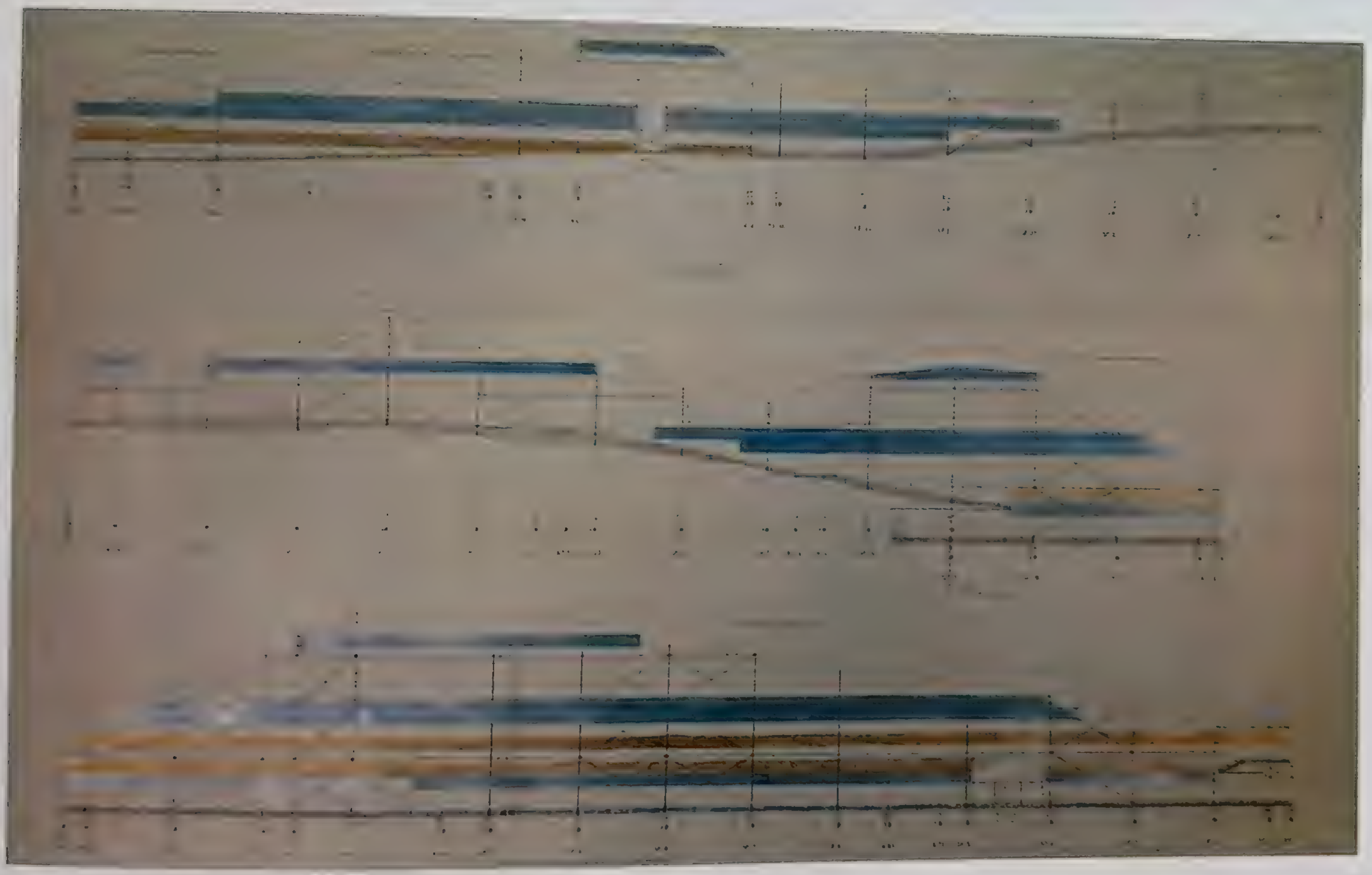


Fig. 147 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, Vorschlag für die Glasfassade der Sporthalle (Proposal for the glass facade of the Sport Hall), 1970. Materials, dimensions, and location unknown. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

Fig. 148 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, Vorschlag für die Glasfassade der Schwimmhalle (Proposal for the glass facade of the Swim Hall), 1970. Materials, dimensions, and location unknown. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

cific historical implications that also made it problematic. The grounds and buildings centered, in the architects' words, around an "open expanse, translucence, and a commanding view," thereby projecting an image of transparency, optimism, spectacle, and community—the opposite of the darkness and secrecy of Germany's past. Visitors who climbed the sixty-meter-high grassy hill on the edge of the Oberwiesenfeld would find beautiful views of the complex; but as locals could tell them, the peaceful hill had been created from the rubble left by the Allied bombing of Munich and was known as the *Schuttberg* (rubble hill).[75] Transparency and opacity were rhetorically and historically charged, and Palermo and Richter's Olympic proposals, like De Maria's, hit a nerve by questioning the openness of the Games, their literal and rhetorical transparency.

The artists never got the chance to realize their concept and think through its nuances further. "Richter and Palermo's art project, which had not been made in collaboration with the architects, was viewed with skepticism," Behnisch and Partner team member Christian Kandzia recalled; "Aside from the additional costs for changing the [already installed] glass, the colors proposed by Richter and Palermo gave significance to the boundary of the hall. The separation would have even been aestheticized. The proposal contradicted the architectural concept to see the sport sites as parts of the landscape. . . . In light of all this, the project never came up for closer consideration of works to be realized."[76] Instead, Adolf Luther's *Spherical Object Olympia*—rotating columns made from strips of concave mirrors embedded in Plexiglas—was chosen for display in the entrance area of the Sporthalle.[77]

Whether the two artists were equally disappointed by the rejection of their proposal is unclear: Richter took the Olympic project "very seriously," but we do not know what Palermo thought.[78] In his subsequent work with glass and windows Palermo apparently preferred to address more manageable issues with limited political ramifications. His wall painting reproduction of a slightly reduced version of a preexisting window frame at the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst in December 1970 approached the play with transparency and opacity by intertwining painting and architecture, abstraction and design (see fig. 90).[79] *Himmelsrichtungen* for the 1976 Venice Biennale—made from four sheets of glass mounted across the corners of a hall, evenly colored white, black, yellow, and red—also concerned changing light and the role of facture in monochrome painting (see fig. 120).

COLLABORATION, 1970

Palermo and Richter were busy together leading up to the October submission of their Olympic proposals. During that same month they opened a virtually unknown yet important exhibition with a true collaborative work. *Diese Ausstellung widmen wir Salvadore Dali* (This Exhibition We Dedicate to Salvador Dalí)—a surprising, provocative, and funny title—was mounted in the two rooms of the Galerie Ernst in Hanover, where Palermo had shown two wall paintings the previous year. In each room one of Richter's abstractions of close-up views of liquid paint—*Ausschnitt (Rot Blau)* (Cut Out [Red, Blue]) and *Ausschnitt (Grau Lila)* (Cut Out [Gray, Purple]) —was paired with a painted intervention in the space by Palermo in which black bands the width of a hand framed the ceiling.

Part and whole relations form the experiential and conceptual core of this collaboration. On the one hand, Palermo's circumscriptions isolated the ceilings from their supporting walls, fragmenting the spaces. In perhaps the only surviving photograph of the full exhibition (fig. 149), the ceiling seems to lift off (the frame disconnects it from the walls) and dematerialize (the frame appears to be empty). At the same time, the two frames had a unifying effect, integrating the separate, adjacent spaces by making them appear to mirror each other. (Palermo emphasized this mirroring in his documentation of the work; fig. 150.) Each of the two spaces was also unified in itself. By articulating the outline of the ceiling, the lines drew the visitor's attention to the parallel outline of the floor, marked by the baseboards. The

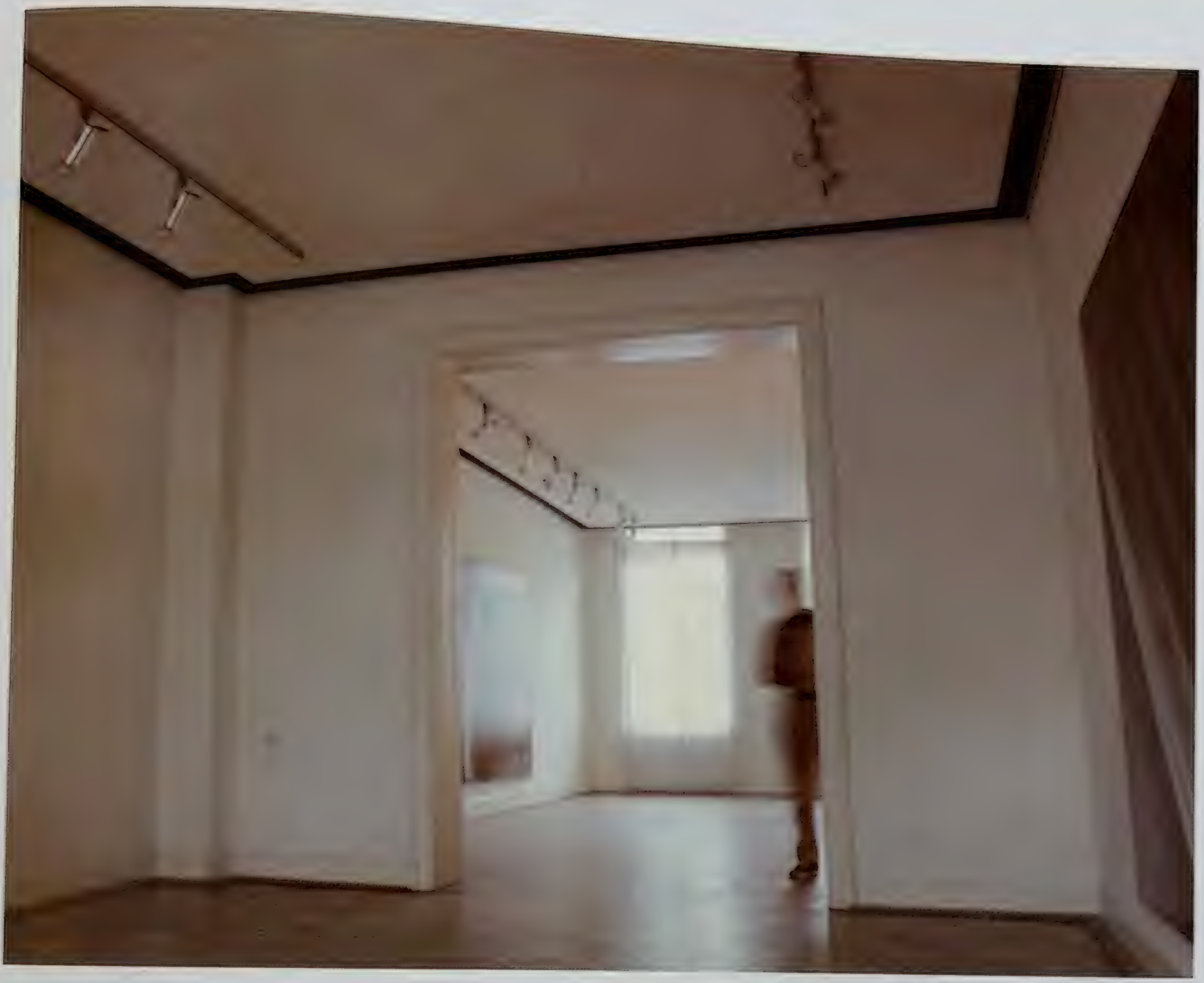
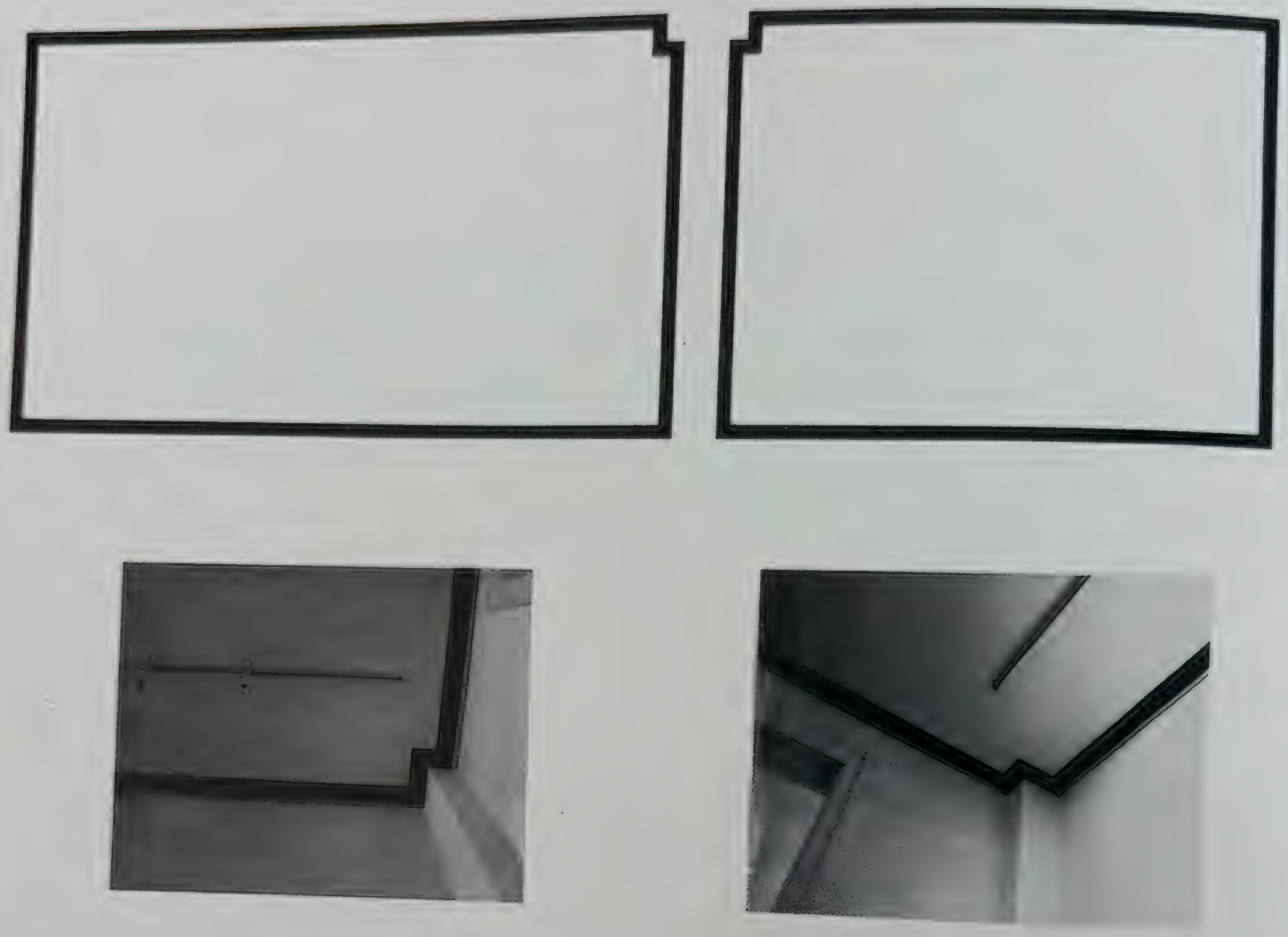
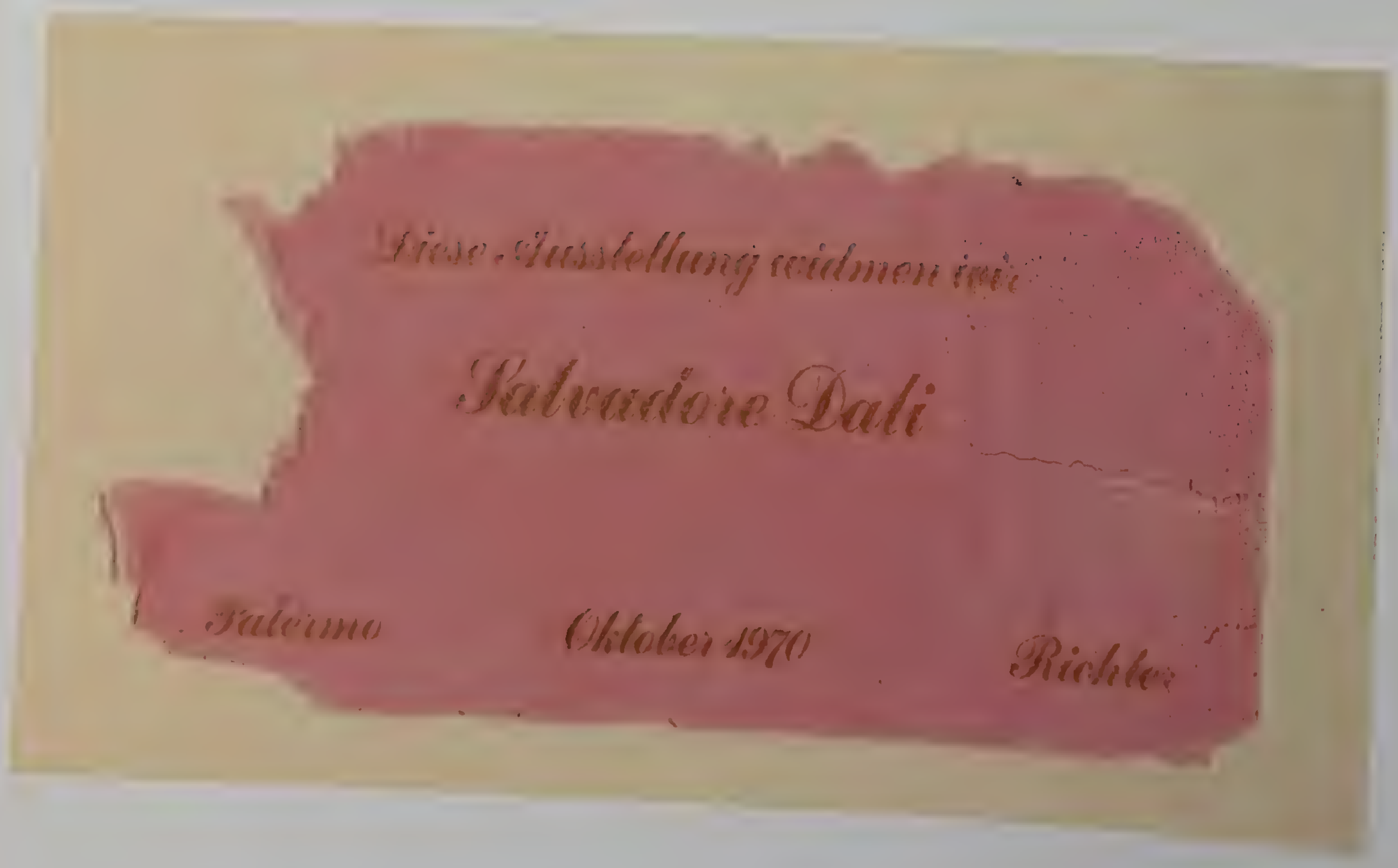


Fig. 149 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, *Diese Ausstellung widmen wir Salvadore Dali* (This Exhibition We Dedicate to Salvador Dalí), exhibition at Galerie Ernst, Hanover, 10 October–6 November 1970. Black paint on wall, and oil on canvas, front room: 450 x 600 cm; back room: 450 x 750 cm; paintings: each 200 x 300 cm. Sprengel Museum, Hanover, and private collection. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.





Diese Ausstellung widmen wir

Salvadore Dali

Palermo Oktober 1970 Richter

Fig. 150 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, documentation for *Diese Ausstellung widmen wir Salvadore Dali* (This Exhibition We Dedicate to Salvador Dalí), exhibition at Galerie Ernst, Hanover, 10 October–6 November 1970. Pen and photographs glued on cardboard, dimensions and location unknown. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

Fig. 151 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, invitation to *Diese Ausstellung widmen wir Salvadore Dali* (This Exhibition We Dedicate to Salvador Dalí), 10 October–6 November 1970. Edible paper and cocoa powder, c. 8 x 18 cm. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

detail photographs Palermo chose for his documentation also stress the way the prominent bands pulled in the single built-out corner in each space, correcting its interference with the geometric shape by articulating it architecturally, even sculpturally.[80]

The experience of Richter's paintings is similarly complicated. On the one hand, viewers needed to step back to take in the slightly overwhelming presence of the two-by-three-meter blown-up motifs; on the other, they would have been pulled in to examine the painterly details of these painterly details. The two paintings, identical in size, with their related motifs, would likewise be experienced as parts of an absent whole: we can imagine viewers walking back and forth between the two rooms, trying in vain to connect the canvases mentally, perhaps also trying to mentally slide the right wall backward to return it to face its other half.

In Palermo's and Richter's contributions, each artist echoed the other's play with parts and whole. Palermo created architectural frames for Richter's paintings, but rather than enclosing the works, the frames were displayed alongside the pictures. As a result, each frame by Palermo lacks an object to be framed, and each blown-up detail by Richter lacks a frame. Nevertheless, Palermo's frame and Richter's detail come together as two lost parts, a new whole perpetually in the making. The Galerie Ernst exhibition thus represents the first true collaboration of Palermo and Richter at the same time as it defines what true collaboration means: two contributions, which form at the same time distinct, whole entities and related, complementary parts, come together in a new totality while preserving their distinct identities.

Palermo and Richter's first collaboration reflects not just on the practice of collaboration but also on the status and future of painting in what both were experiencing as a climate hostile to the medium. In *Diese Ausstellung*, painting is self-reflexive, perceptually engaging, beautiful, and serious, just like the modernist painting that was currently under attack. Palermo's frame self-reflexively defines and *is* the work of art, closing it off from anything beyond itself; Richter's detail self-reflexively enlarges and elevates the chief ingredient of painting to its sole subject, thus blinding the viewer to anything beyond itself. That self-reflexivity, along with the clarity created by Palermo's frame and the state of absorption engendered by Richter's details, is a traditional aspect of beauty in aesthetic theory. Richter is unashamedly clear about this point when he writes that "the *Ausschnitte* of 70/71 are very small extracts [*Ausschnitte*], ca. 1–2 cm^2 from palettes or from paintings, which by way of their enlargements as paintings become nonobjective appearances of indeterminate 'beauty.'"[81]

But Palermo and Richter also present painting as being near the point of self-destruction. Richter shows liquid paint in its most material form but eliminates any sense of facture in his slick, photographically mediated representation. Even he had reservations about the works because "they are so pleasing [*gefällig*], decorative, and interesting that their true achievement and their anti-attitude is overlooked." As he noted, "I was quite aware that this is a tricky undertaking, that if they are not kitsch, they are very close to it." Palermo likewise reduced painting to a frame that is barely there and flirts with meaningless ornamentation. One contemporary described Richter's paintings as "an homage for Salvador Dalí on white walls framed in black by Palermo like death announcements."[82] The facetious, kitschy, consumable exhibition invitation—made of pink edible paper and printed in calligraphy with cocoa powder (fig. 151)—further reinforced the impression that painting was reaching an end.[83]

Ultimately, Palermo and Richter integrated the positioning of painting as modernist and painting as over with in order to reinvent the medium. The baby-pink invitation resembled not a death announcement but a birth announcement. Richter explained, "*Für Salvadore Dali* was meant polemically, an attitude of protest. Dalí was really over with [*unten durch*], he was quite reactionary in social-political terms. The kitsch in his painting was over with."[84] Painting and abstract art's "other"—in the form of decoration, kitsch, architecture and space, and photography—come together to create new meanings. For Richter, photographic mediation and kitsch allowed painting to probe concepts such as reality, truth, and authenticity in a society defined by mass culture. For Palermo the contradictory coexistence of phenomenological and banal effects within decoration kept alive but also projected skepticism about socially engaged conceptions of art and the consumerism of Germany's economic miracle.[85]

Palermo and Richter's collaborative practice of instantiating painting's other and asking rather than answering questions, all in the context of self-reflexivity, became a way to create an artistic complexity that within a few weeks they would proudly experience as distinctly European. Meaning is continuously in the making as many components enter a layered, multi-directional engagement, at times in tune with one another, at times full of friction.[86] Palermo and Richter's peers—particularly, Polke and Immendorff—focused on all the things painting could not be. Palermo and Richter focused on all the things it could be, attempting to open up the discourse of painting. Collaboration came naturally to the two artists, not only because they shared a passion for the possibilities of painting but also because the nature of collaboration is additive and stratified: "If you do this then I do that"; "Let's see what you do if I do this."

In mid-November 1970, Palermo and Richter left for New York.[87] Palermo's interest in American art and music is well documented. Richter, among other artists, has credited Palermo with first introducing him to many postwar American artists. Asked, for example, whether by the early sixties he knew painters of the New York School other than Jackson Pollock, such as Newman and Willem de Kooning, Richter responded that he "hardly knew them. Only later did I get to know them a little through Palermo." With respect to Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, he has stated frankly, "It was more the fame of these people that astonished me."[88] Palermo's desire to go to New York stemmed from passion, Richter's from curiosity. Both were surprised by their actual experience. "I was in New York with him, it was beautiful. . . . For both of us it was the first trip to New York. We had booked fourteen days with a travel agency, a cheap flight, a cheap hotel, and returned after ten days, because we were so exhausted and tired from walking, walking, walking. We had enough then and we felt, for the first time, that we were Europeans, we felt a little proud. That was a great experience, that that was so, that we sensed, we are Europeans, we are different [*ein Anderer*], we are a little more complicated, and they are so straight [Richter used the English word] and always have to precisely simplify everything, clearly, and we don't."[89] This important bonding experience propelled the two into four further collaborations the following year.

COLLABORATIONS, 1971

In 1971 Palermo and Richter collaborated on an intervention at the Munich apartment of Six Friedrich, for which Palermo once again conceived of a kind of frame to be displayed alongside two of Richter's paintings, *Klorolle* (1965) and *Vorhang* (1964). These were hung to the left of a window that Palermo framed at its right and bottom edges with a gray angle approximately sixteen centimeters wide, painted directly onto the wall (figs. 152, 153). The no-longer-extant installation should almost certainly be considered collaborative, at least from Palermo's perspective, for he noted as much on his documentation for the wall painting, *Grauer Winkel* (Gray Angle)—"gray angle/distances to window wall and floor equal, apartment Six Friedrich/Munich/with Gerd Richter." Six Friedrich remembers Palermo outlining and Richter painting the gray angle—unusual, if correct, for Palermo customarily painted his wall paintings himself.[90] Palermo and Richter once again interwove traditional ideas about painting with various embodiments of the medium's other, if in slightly less layered ways than in Hanover. The centuries-old idea of painting as a window provides the conceptual and physical focus of the installation, since an actual window is centrally placed and framed, as it were, by Palermo's angle and Richter's canvases. (In addi-

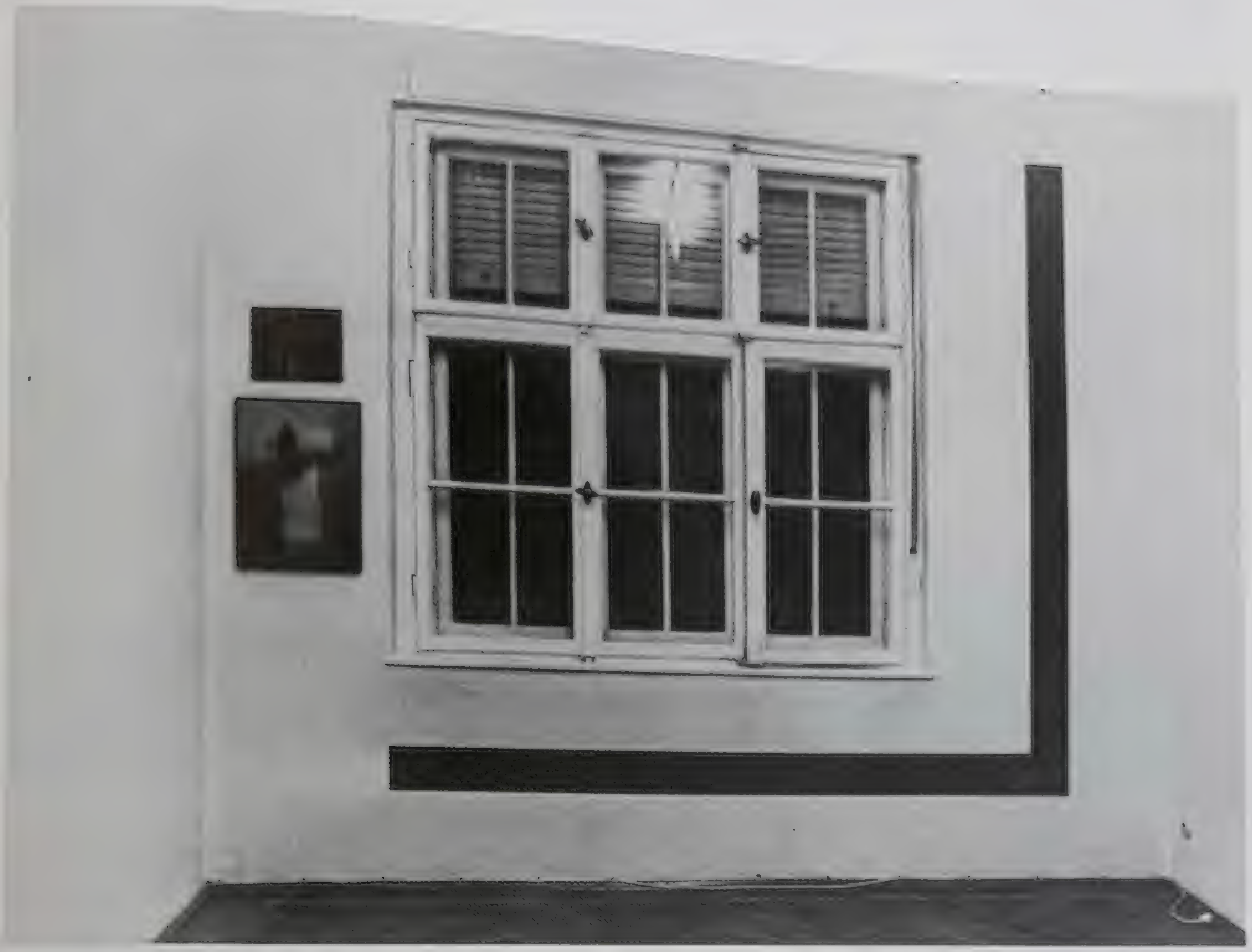


Fig. 152 Palermo, *Grauer Winkel* (Gray Angle), alongside Richter, *Vorhang* (Curtain) and *Klorolle* (Toilet-Paper Roll), apartment of Six Friedrich, Munich, 1971. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

tion, the window's configuration also appears reminiscent of a traditional multi-panel altarpiece.) Their works solicit a dialogue with the window over questions of reproduction, banality, and decoration. Reproduction comes in the forms of Richter's photographic sources (*Klorolle* is the first work based on a photograph Richter took specifically for a painting, while *Vorhang* was the first painting without a photographic source) and Palermo's tracing of half the window's frame;[91] banality in the forms of the uninspired tracing, the "filling in" of the space between window and floor and between window and wall, and Richter's choices of the toilet-paper roll as a subject in general and of the curtain as a subject in this particular place; the decorative in the forms of interior decoration, with Palermo's angle and Richter's curtain functioning as ornamental framing devices for the window.

That painting is not through was Richter's implication in this painting of a roll of toilet paper, made in response to seeing Marcel Duchamp's ready-made of a urinal, *Fountain,* at the artist's retrospective in Krefeld.[92] Richter and Palermo instead explore the possibilities for remaking painting: Richter probes the perception of reality (a painted curtain next to an actual window); Palermo skeptically embraces socially engaged and consumerist positions through decoration, which joins phenomenological and banal effects (the gray angle decorating the window, though banal, provides a means to create perceptual certainty and uncertainty, as it optically, but not spatially, corrects the asymmetrical placement of the window on the wall).

The idea for the artists' next work, their best-known collaboration, came to Richter at the February opening of Palermo's *Wandmalerei auf gegenüberliegenden Wänden,* the positive/negative painting, at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich, where Palermo painted one wall of the central room ocher, framed by a white band that ran around wall and door, and reversed the schema on the facing wall (see fig. 79). Viewers simultaneously experienced a heightened spatial awareness and an impression of banality from

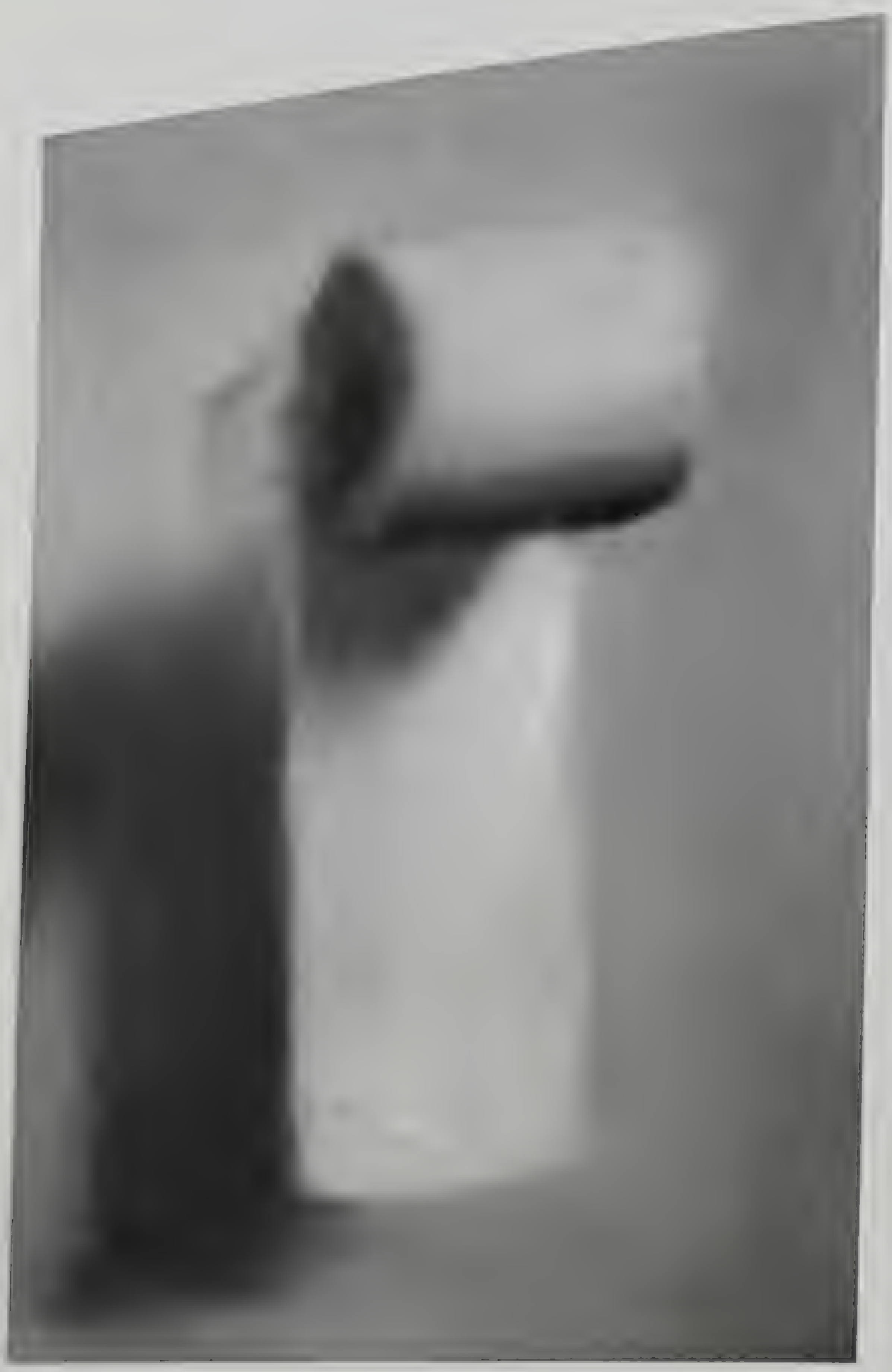
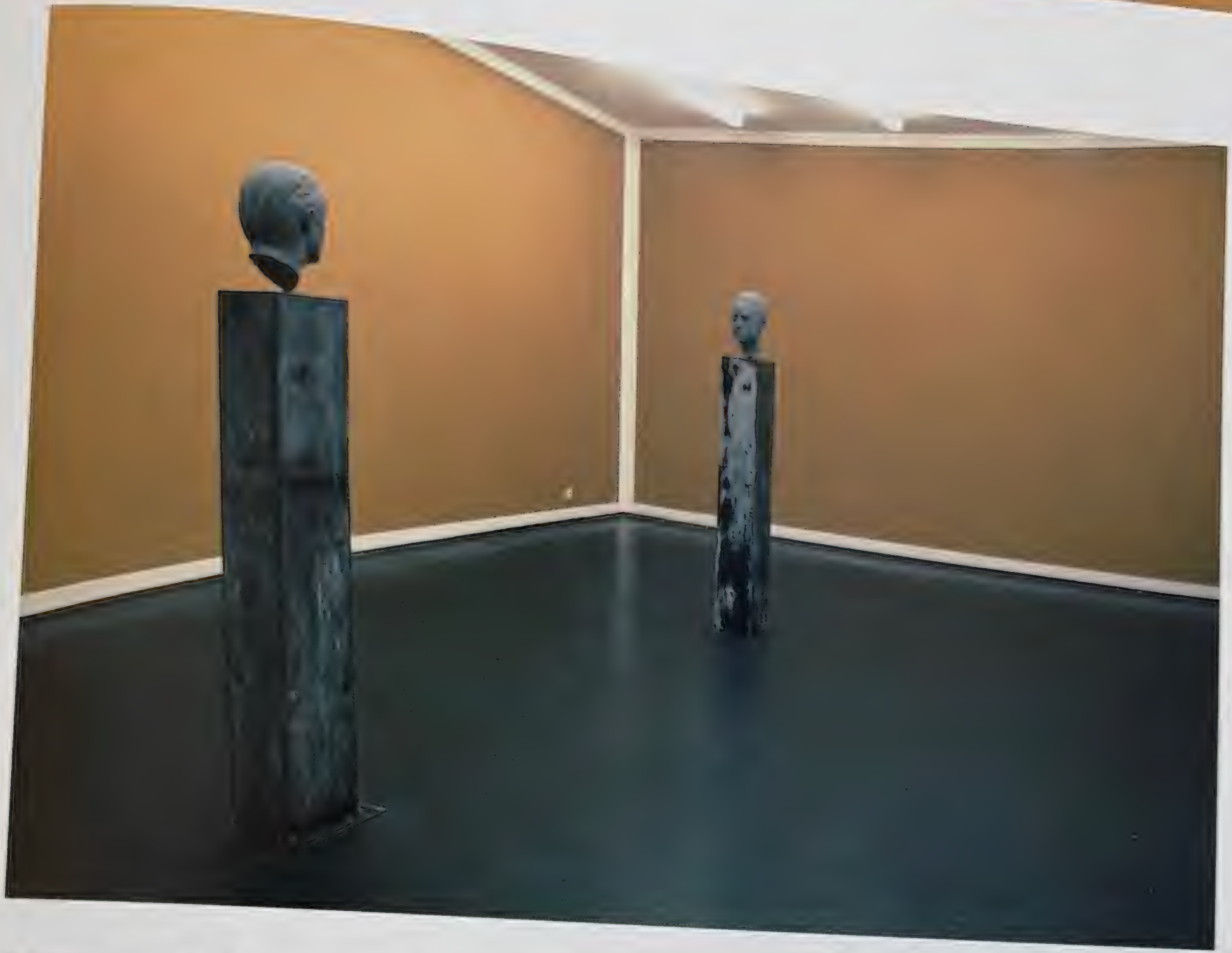


Fig. 153 Gerhard Richter, *Klorolle* (Toilet-Paper Roll), 1965. Oil on canvas, 55 x 40 cm. Collection of Joshua Mack and Ron Warren. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

opposite
Fig. 154 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, *Wandmalerei und Skulptur* (Wall Painting and Sculpture), Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Cologne, 21 April–15 May 1971. Wall paint on walls, and painted plaster on wood pedestals, busts: life size; pedestals: each 174 cm tall. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.



Palermo's use of a decorative frame and a local architectural paint color that he reportedly referred to as *Bayerischer Ocker* or *Münchener Ocker*.[93] Richter, perhaps because he had trained in wall painting, albeit of the socialist realist kind, "liked that wall-painting he made so much" and stressed these decorative features in his description: "He had simply painted this room in classic ocher-yellow and reserved a clean edge." That struck Richter as "neoclassical" (*klassizistisch*) and unusual "in those modern times back then . . .that was so beautifully traditional, a hint of that. I liked that very much, and then I said, really two sculptures belong in there, into such a room—well, do that!"[94]

Wandmalerei und Skulptur opened at Friedrich's new Cologne gallery soon thereafter, on 21 April (figs. 154, 155).[95] Richter exhibited two plaster busts painted gray—one of himself, the other of Palermo —placed facing each other on tall wooden pedestals, also painted gray. "We made those ourselves," Richter recounts. "I took the plaster cast of his face, he supervised mine, and I modeled the rest as additions, the hair, the ears, the back of the head." To that end, they once again took photographs of each other, now collected in Richter's *Atlas*. Palermo painted all four walls ocher, probably the same tone used in Munich, and framed each with a white stripe.[96] Now colored planes and white stripes completely blended in with the architecture and acted as pure embellishment. Palermo in effect enhanced the references to neoclassical interior design, perhaps because of Richter's encouragement concerning the decorative feel of the Munich wall painting, perhaps to accommodate the change in location. While Bavarians in Munich surely understood the local design reference, the decorative connotations might have escaped the Rhineland audience without the extra pointer. Richter's busts pay homage to and parallel Palermo's

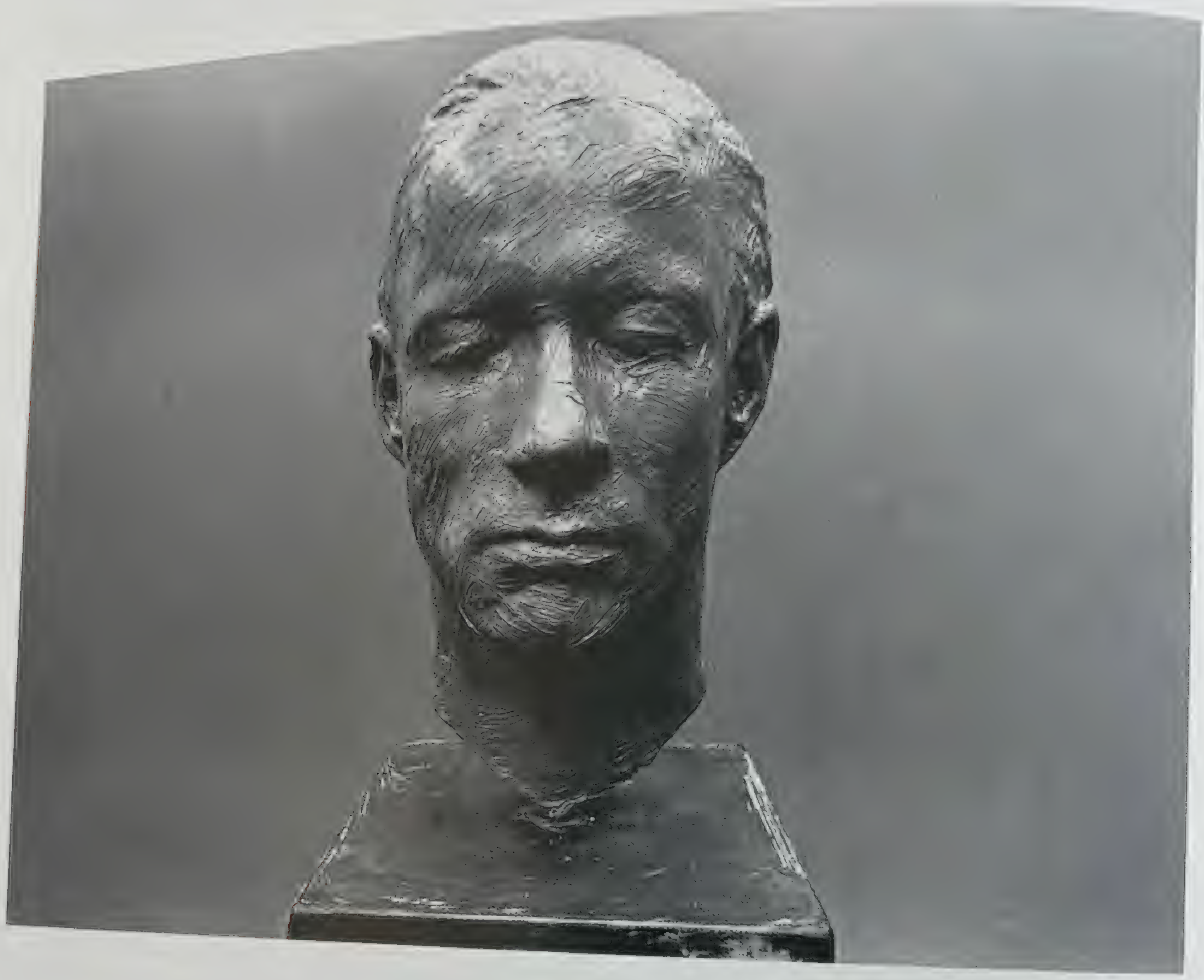


Fig. 155 Gerhard Richter, Palermo bust from *Zwei Skulpturen für einen Raum von Palermo* (Two Sculptures for a Room by Palermo), 1971. Plaster painted gray, life size. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

project of juggling an experience that is at once heightened and banal: they are stand-ins for contemplative bodies experiencing the wall painting and cheap bronze imitations made from direct (as opposed to skillfully modeled) casts.

If Palermo's wall paintings mobilized heightened awareness and banality to project skepticism regarding contemporary currents of political art and consumption, this is also the case for *Wandmalerei und Skulptur*. For Buchloh, the historical significance of this work is not so much tied to the contemporary context from which it arose but lies in postwar Germany's relation to its fascist past. He argues that Richter and Palermo question the power relations associated with bust portraiture in the fascist era but simultaneously refuse simply to reject the commemorative function of art that busts embody. For Buchloh, the exhibition further suggests that the cult of the artist, embodied in the pedestaled busts of the two artists, compensated for and hindered historical memory in postwar Germany.[97] Integrating these two readings of the work, as resonant with the present and resonant with the past, one might say that Palermo's contribution tended to stress the context of the present and Richter's the past. Taken by itself, Palermo's wall painting does not address the theme of power.

That said, *Wandmalerei und Skulptur*, as indicated by its title and the subjects of the sculptures, is above all about itself, about art and artists and about dialogue and collaboration. Established traditions in art and painting—neoclassical interior design and figurative portrait busts, modernist abstract monochromes and self-reflexive self-portraits, the elevation of artists onto pedestals—are all invoked. These traditions, however, are also shown to be in crisis, not least because they come in the form of historical citations. The faces of the busts, with their closed eyes reminiscent of death masks and skin sealed lifelessly by paint, memorialize art practices that are no longer valid. Palermo's wall painting virtually reduces art to decorative framing. Likewise, Richter's austere, imposing pedestals, life-size themselves, effectively dwarf the life-size heads, thereby reducing the power of the artist-creator. Moreover, the artist is not alone—there are two busts—nor is his work unique: he creates likenesses by copying, as is suggested by the visible paint application, which follows and imitates the sculptural surface, and by the direct casting method, another mode of copying (although it is arguably invisible).[98] As in the positive/negative wall painting, viewers could also have intuited a certain lack of skill in Palermo's visibly handmade, decorative paint job. Art and painting are posited as simultaneously alive and dead, positions that contradict each other, perhaps even cancel each other out. Palermo and Richter beg for the reinvention of art, especially painting. As Richter explained, "Portraits like those two sculptures, looking at each other with their eyes shut, one didn't make that as a joke or for tactical reasons. There was something more essential at stake, value and respect for myself and for the painter Palermo, who made art completely against the grain [*gegen allen Zeitgeist*]. One really felt isolated at the time and was happy that someone was still painting and thought in a similar way."[99] In their isolation, Palermo and Richter relied on each other.

Wandmalerei und Skulptur reflects on the condition of art and painting but also on the nature of dialogue and collaboration. More than ever before Palermo and Richter's individual contributions were in tune. The invitation announced *eine gemeinsame Arbeit*, "a collaborative work," but Richter made room for the autonomy of his own contribution, to which he subsequently bestowed the independent title *Zwei Skulpturen für einen Raum von Palermo:* "They were with the Palermo walls only for an exhibition. It wasn't a condition that the sculptures had to be placed with the Palermo walls."[100] Collaboration as a joining of parts to create a new whole, with new layers of meanings, then, is figured not only in the act of pairing wall painting and sculptures but also in each of the autonomous contributions. Unlike the separated facing walls in Munich, Palermo's walls in Cologne join distinct walls into a unified room, while the white bands that separate the ocher walls also join by doubling the corners.

Richter's busts present the two artists more literally but in an understated dialogue, sensing each other without looking, understanding each other without speaking, thus recalling Richter's earlier assessment that he and Palermo "had this *sense,* what is good and bad," that "something was immediately understood." Further references to collaboration abound. With their origin in photographs the artists took of each other, Richter's sculptures reflect back on a year of collaboration that had begun when Palermo started sharing his studio and they had first taken photographs of each other in front of *Cloud.* Their changed expressions in the busts indicate that things are now more serious. With the paint thickly applied across their cast faces, these portraits also pay tribute to another originating moment in Palermo and Richter's collaborations: for their singing sculptures, Gilbert and George had painted their faces to look like bronze, and they had done so within the same walls, surrounded by their own paintings and drawings, mounted floor to ceiling. Like the British artists' performance, *Wandmalerei und Skulptur* stands in marked contrast to the mockery of the traditional artist as elevated, powerful creator that was central to Richter's earlier collaborations with Polke and Lueg. Palermo and Richter tentatively, if not wholeheartedly, reach back to the nineteenth century, to the style of neoclassicism but also to the concerns and subjects of Romanticism, when artists began advocating for the autonomy of art (from the academy, the status quo) and creating friendship portraits (as icons of support and community in the face of this new freedom).[101] These artists also envisioned, to return to the words of Schlegel, a time when "complementary minds [would] create communal works of art." Between 1970 and 1971, Palermo and Richter fulfilled his idea that "two minds really belong together, like divided halves that can realize their full potential only when joined."

Palermo and Richter's next collaboration departed from the principle followed in the earlier installations, where Palermo's work effectively framed and contextualized Richter's. Instead their untitled painting from 1971 returned to the diptych format of *Fingerspuren.* Since they had painted that work about a year earlier, however, the scale and complexity of their collaborative work had grown—in direct proportion, one might say, to the artists' rapport and ambitions. Palermo contributed two identical monochrome beige square canvases, each coupled on its left with a rectangular blurred lightbulb painted by Richter, the whole creating a diptych made of two diptychs measuring 150 by 320 centimeters each (fig. 156). The paintings intricately interweave many of the concerns articulated in Palermo and Richter's earlier work, both collaborative and solo.

Each of their contributions engages with both the beginning and the ending of painting; Palermo and Richter were once again moving forward to rescue their medium. Palermo's beige monochromes explore the idea of the tabula rasa, the clean slate or the fresh start, as also represented, for example, by Kasimir Malevich's *White on White* or Robert Ryman's seemingly endless white paintings (to mention two artists Palermo cared about deeply).[102] Richter's painted photographic blurs of light allude to another end of painting, brought about by the invention and proliferation of photography, of "writing with light." And yet, given the elusiveness of the motif, they also call to mind the fact that abstract painting was born, at least in part, from that medium. Richter's canvases deal with this duality in the context of perception. He paints a direct, intense light that allows us to "see"—for in contrast to Palermo's monochromes, Richter's panels give us something approximating an "image"—both fulfilling a traditional precondition for painting and alluding to painters' age-old fascination with light. But at the same time he blinds us—for we do not actually see anything and can determine only with great difficulty that the source of these sparkles is some form of light—essentially eliminating the possibility of painting.[103]

Together, Palermo's and Richter's contributions explore the concept of reality and the intersection of

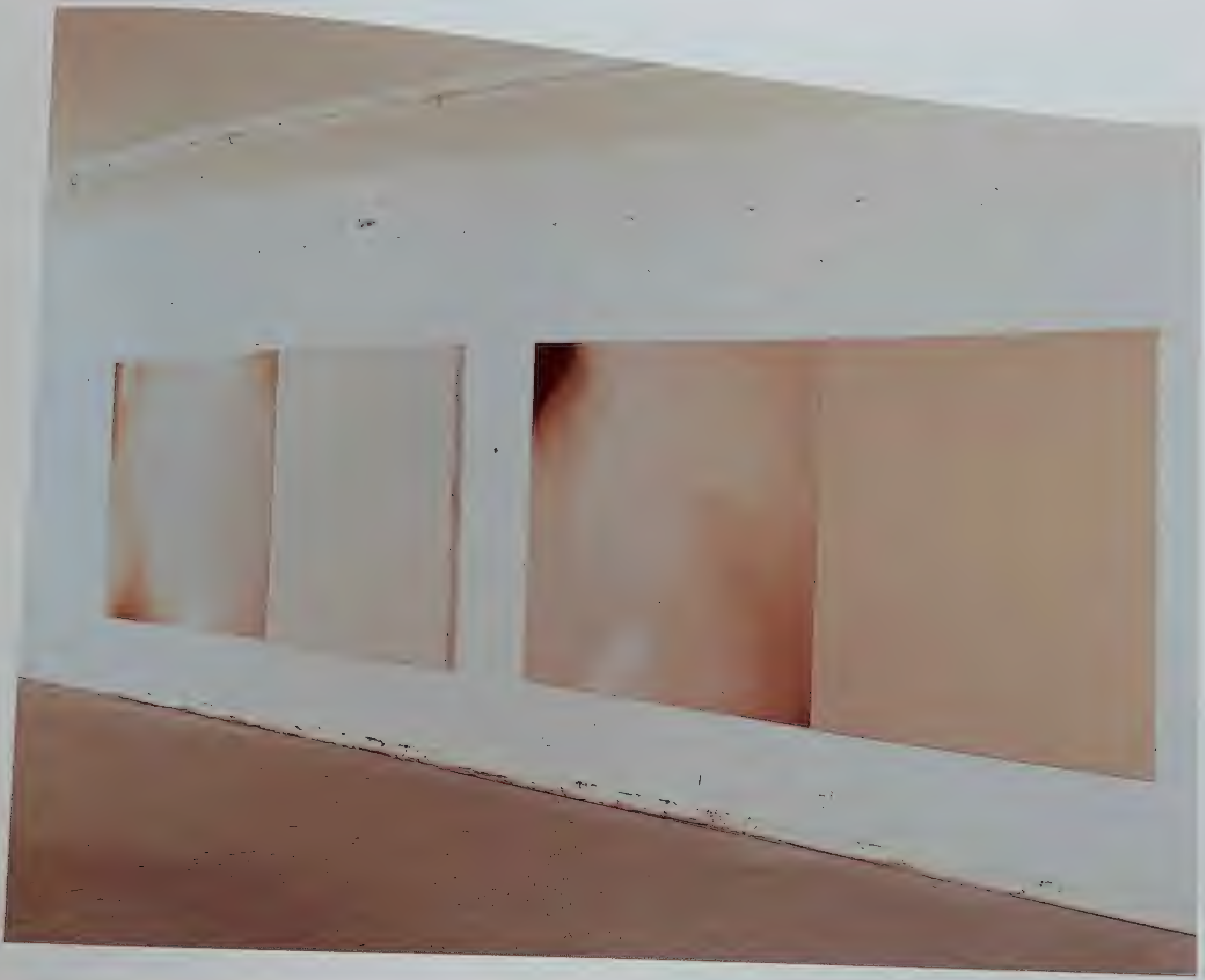


Fig. 156 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, *Untitled* (*Wvz* 151), in Richter's studio on Harkortstrasse, Düsseldorf, c. 1971. Oil on canvas. Two diptychs, each 150 x 320 cm. Private collection. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

modernism and the market. In keeping with concerns that primarily underlie Richter's oeuvre, each of the diptychs juxtaposes different possibilities of conceiving reality in art. Richter *paints* a light source to reveal, and revel in, photographic artifice by choosing the motif of lens flare and shooting rays and by juxtaposing two different photographs of the same lightbulb. Palermo's monochromes *reflect* the light of their surroundings and therefore change in tandem with the actual light source. Richter's illusion of light meets Palermo's actual light; representation meets presentation. In that Palermo's monochromes reduce painting to its bare essentials of paint on canvas, the diptychs also contrast paintings that refer outside themselves with paintings that refer to themselves; the world at large meets the world of art, representation meets abstraction.

The diptych also goes back to some of the shared concerns that surfaced in the dialogue between Palermo's first cloth pictures and Richter's first color charts and that continued in the dedication of the yellow-white cloth picture *für G. Richter:* their intertwining of pop, commodity, and the ready-made with modernism, abstraction, and painting. The panels in the two pairs nod in different directions. The airbrushed look of Richter's smooth gradations and shadings (similar to the shadings that later fill the backgrounds of some of his gestural paintings) and his blurred photographic painting technique assert a pop abstraction. The flatness and wholeness of Palermo's monochromes, by contrast, stress the essentialist dimension of abstraction. The diptych thereby conceptually distills the polarities underlying Richter's and Palermo's oeuvres. It also radically distills their slightly differing emphases; taken alone, Palermo's panels are his most radically monochrome, modernist works up to that point, while Richter's pop blurs stand in, as it were, for the commercial fabric that Palermo here covered with regular oil paint.

The collaboration did, in fact, result from their joint consideration of the proper degrees of abstraction. Following his description of the genesis of *Fingerspuren*, Richter turned to this diptych. "After that it just so happened once in a while. . . . The occasion was two Polaroid photos lying on the table. I had taken them of a lightbulb, and I said, 'I'm a little concerned about painting that, that's too abstract.' And he said, 'Oh, I'll just make one to add, then it becomes even more abstract [*dann wird's noch abstrakter*].'"[104] The finished work was on display at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Cologne from mid-March to mid-May 1972, along with Richter's 1967 painting *Olympia* and Palermo's *Leisesprecher III* (fig. 157).[105] Begun in 1968, when Palermo made the first two works from the series in conjunction with the cloth picture dedicated to Richter, this version was completed in 1972, perhaps on the occasion of this exhibition. Conceptually this would have made sense, for Palermo in the *Leisesprecher* had been addressing the same issues addressed by the collaborative diptych, though "quietly," in the sense of discreetly (if equally convincingly). Commercial fabric, hemmed and pinned to the wall, met modernist, monochrome picture. What Palermo and Richter had independently stumbled upon with cloth pictures and color charts in 1966 now, as a result of their collaborations, appeared fully matured in the third and largest version of the *Leisesprecher* and not once but twice in the collaborative diptych. In this meeting of lightbulbs and monochromes, perhaps painting could be saved.

For what would be their final collaboration Palermo and Richter turned to printmaking. In *Telefon* (Telephone) an expansive, intense yellow ground, silk-screened pristinely by Palermo, frames two small, stacked images printed in four-color letterpress by Richter—a blurred image of a telephone placed in a corner with its receiver on the hook and a reproduction, it seems, of one of the diptych lightbulb panels (fig. 158). *Telefon* compresses everything these two artists had worked on and cared about in their short time together: the decorative, the monochrome, and the color yellow, all represented by the framing field; the sliding scale of abstraction and figuration; the commodity embodied in reproducible art, commonplace letterpress print, banal household

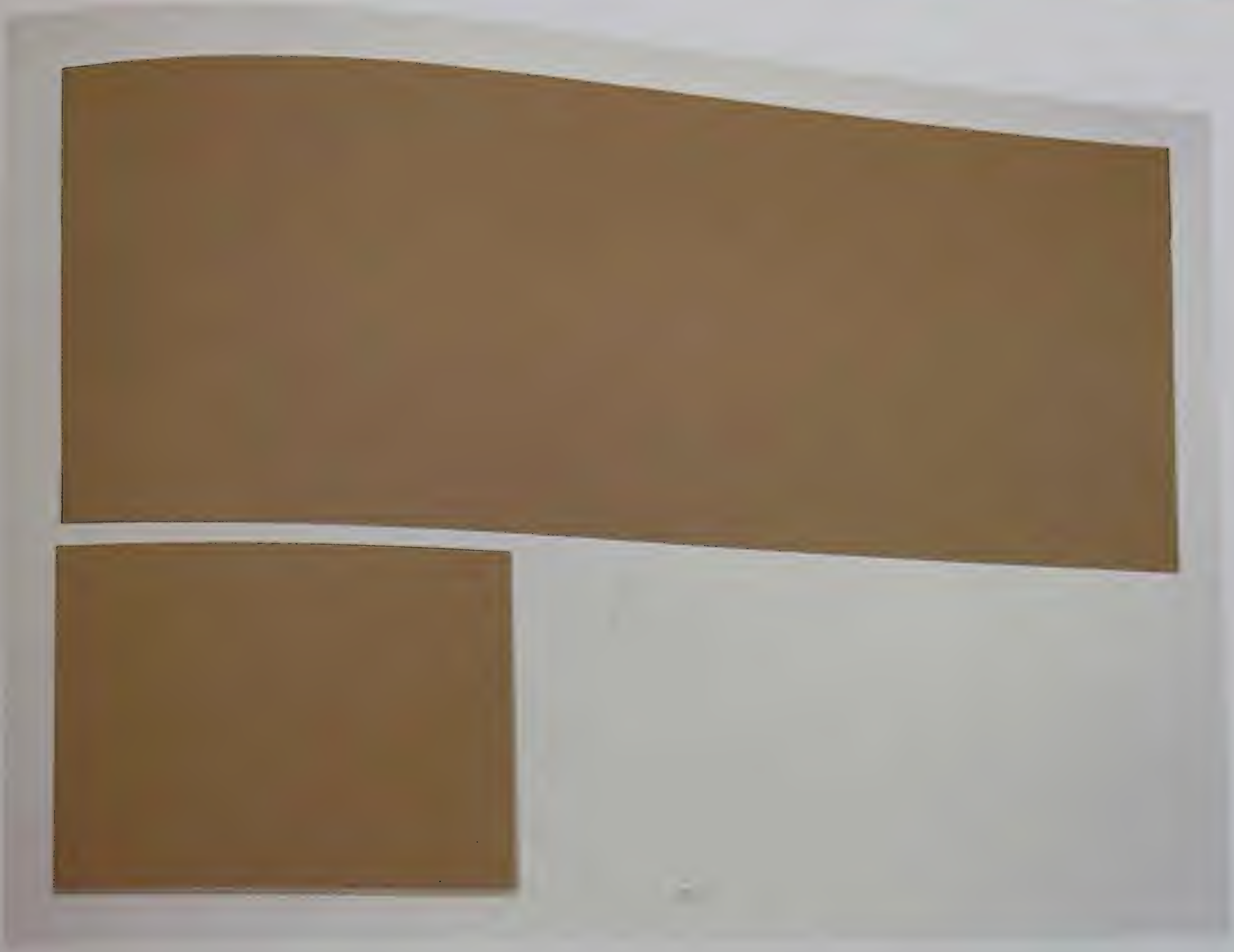


Fig. 157 *Leisesprecher III* (Quiet Speaker III) (*Wvz* 152), 1968–72. Top: linen, 240 x 427 cm; bottom: linen over wood, 120 x 160 x 4.4 cm. Kunstmuseum Bonn.

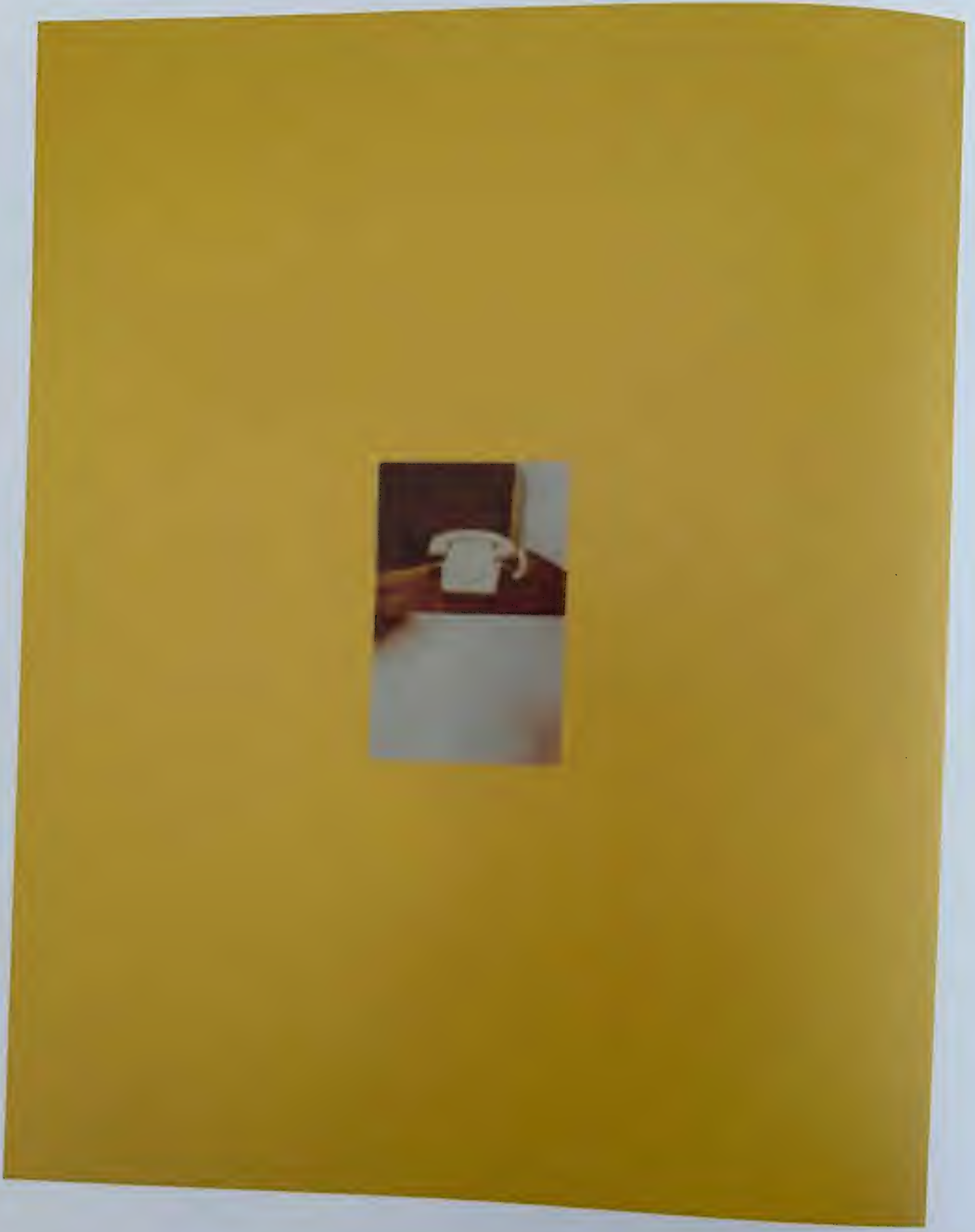


Fig. 158 Palermo and Gerhard Richter, *Telefon* (Telephone), 1971. Four-color letterpress and silkscreen on Offsetkarton, 60.5 x 48 cm. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

object, and evenly printed sample paint; the conjunction of the traditional and the up to date, exemplified respectively by the two printing techniques and the perspectival space around the telephone set into a flat pictorial plane; collaborative strategies of both framing and juxtaposition; and, above all, communication without words.[106]

AFTER COLLABORATION

With its summation of the two artists' concerns, *Telefon* was an appropriate final collaboration for Palermo and Richter. And the two artists were ready to move on to individual concerns. Richter, for one, was busy with the fruits of his success. During the course of 1971, he had his first retrospective at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf, was named professor of painting at the Düsseldorf academy, and began work on his *48 Portraits,* which was to represent Germany at the 1972 Venice Biennale. Palermo, for his part, took up work in his new studio in Mönchengladbach some time around the beginning of the new year. Although it was barely half an hour from Richter's studio, the distance meant that collaboration could no longer come about informally; it could no longer, as Richter put it, "just so happen once in a while."[107] Palermo had hit another creative block, perhaps as early as September 1971 while he was working on the last collaborations with Richter, but certainly by 1972.[108] Whether the end of his close working relationship with Richter had anything to do with this crisis, which lasted almost four years, Palermo's production slowed significantly. In April 1973, Palermo traveled around the United States and in December he moved to New York City at the encouragement of Heiner Friedrich, who had established an American branch of his gallery on Wooster Street. Richter had never been happy about Palermo's dependence on Friedrich. "We almost beat each other up once—Friedrich and I," Richter recalls. "We faced each other with our fists clenched, we fought over Palermo—like: 'You come along!'—'You stay!'—or something like that."[109]

Palermo and Richter remained important to each other across this distance. Since 1966 each had given the other strength to paint in a climate that was hostile to the medium, as summed up in 1966 by Immendorff's *Hört auf zu malen* (Stop Painting; fig. 159). The late sixties and early seventies were dominated by conceptual art, imported largely from the United States, and by politically ambitious, even activist, art, pervasive in Western Europe in the wake of the radical events of 1968. Unlike Immendorff and others, Palermo and Richter never dwelled on the death of painting and continued to see a future for it, and they worked through various historical conceptions in order to move forward and open up possibilities for the medium and for art more generally. Two strikingly similar but independently made statements illustrate their common commitment to liberating painting from formal, conceptual, and political constraints. Here is Richter in 1966: "I pursue no objectives, no system, no tendency, I have no program, no style, no concern." And Palermo in 1968: "I pursue no specific tendency in the sense of a style. I have no program, just an aesthetic concept, whereby I try to leave open for myself as many forms of expressions as possible."[110] In order to open up possibilities for painting, they turned to that which modern painting, particularly abstract painting, had evaded: figuration and outmoded modes of art making, the ready-made and the commodity, design and decoration. The result was painting with layers of meaning, that was self-reflexive and historically resonant at the same time, that reflected on its limits and options but also on its context, defined by the culture of consumption and by the demands placed on art within the highly politicized communities of the late sixties and early seventies. It was a form of painting that was possible only after 1968, when the deadlock in the art world and beyond had to be ended. Historical relevance had to become nuanced again, so that commodification could be made problematic and positive, and political commitment could become effective and constraining. Meaning likewise had to be rescued from mere mottos and transformed into ongoing dialogue and open-mindedness—a place where lightbulbs and monochromes could meet. And a sense of community had to be rebuilt, with individuals coming together the way Palermo and Richter had done.

Palermo had helped Richter by giving him confidence in painting abstractly, allowing him to become the versatile painter he is today. Abstract paintings have dominated Richter's oeuvre since 1972, interspersed here and there with blurs painted from recognizable photographic sources. Richter continued to paint the occasional monochrome, and he began to work with colorful layers of photographically mediated gestures and scrapings, posing questions in his paintings about reality and artifice and about time and memory, no longer simply by means of figurative, historical source material but also in terms of the process of painting. Perhaps it is this understated language of abstraction that Richter perceived and respected as "quiet" in Palermo's art when they first met. Richter in turn had helped Palermo by encouraging him to make more cloth pictures, and even more wall paintings. Two of the wall paintings' central motifs, the circumscribed plane and the monochrome plane, were closely linked to Palermo's work with Richter. The Dalí ceilings were among the first of Palermo's wall circumscriptions and provided a motif for many future installations, including the positive/negative wall painting, which Richter complimented. The monochrome walls Palermo painted for the positive/negative painting and for the collaboration with Richter's portrait busts formed the basis for three subsequent wall paintings.

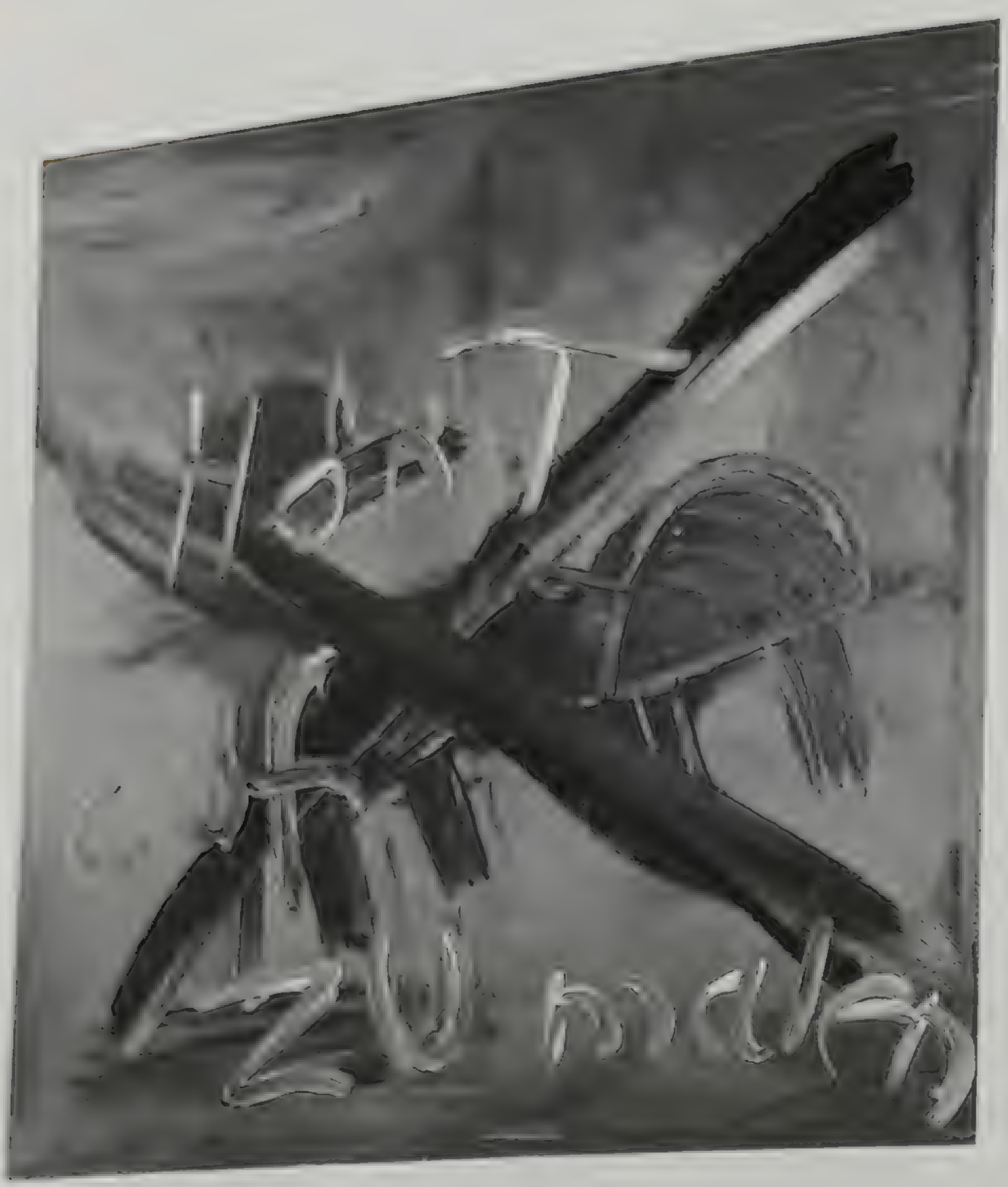


Fig. 159 Jörg Immendorff, *Hört auf zu malen* (Stop Painting), 1966. Synthetic resin on canvas, 135 x 135 cm. Stedelijk van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven. © 2007 Michael Werner Gallery, New York and Cologne, for Estate of Jörg Immendorff.

Even after his move to New York, Palermo returned to motifs developed in his collaborative work with Richter, reconfiguring them in what would become his last body of work. The serial metal pictures, inaugurated with *Times of the Day I* (see fig. 111) and begun around the fall of 1974, marked the end of his creative block. With a passion for American art and a refreshing innocence of most of its critical underpinnings, Palermo in his late work misread, isolated, and reconfigured selected traits of color field, minimalism, and conceptual art, thereby commenting on and escaping the gridlocked discourses that defined the New York art world into the early seventies. Inspiration and support came, retroactively, from the collaborations with Richter, both in terms of their reworkings of painting traditions and in more specific ways.

Violating then-current dogma regarding inherent properties of media and materials, Palermo in the metal pictures applied acrylics to metal surfaces in streaky, encrusted paint layers to form slightly imprecise edges for the top and bottom horizontal stripes. The idea of painting metal developed from his previous use of rust-preventive undercoating, but Richter's odd confluence of paint and metal in the portrait busts of himself and Palermo—plaster that was almost irreverently coated with paint and took the place of bronze—might have inspired Palermo too.[111] The simultaneous status of painting as surface and object underlies his mounting of the metal pictures at a distance from the wall, a proceeding that literalized the optical effects of shallow spaces central to Greenbergian modernism, as manifested in the hovering color planes of Rothko. More important, it reconciled contemporary polarized positions about painting, what Michael Fried retrospectively termed his and Carl Andre's fight for Frank Stella's soul.[112] This reconciliation can be seen most clearly not in Palermo's early objects, which nondialectically reject the flatness of painting, but in the cloth pictures with their fabric wrapping around the stretchers and in the monochrome panels Palermo painted for the diptych with Richter.

Another issue that the collaborations with Richter helped Palermo develop was seriality. Palermo's work before the metal pictures had already revolved around pairings that questioned or enriched each other, particularly in the two-part objects (see figs. 18, 24, 25, 28). The evasion of systems and principles in his New York work, however, depended on the series and the multiplication of more than two elements, seen first in the *Triptychon,* which followed the double diptych made with Richter, and then in various works of the following year.[113] Seriality in the metal pictures is neither simply repetitive nor systematic, as in works by Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt; instead, Palermo's permutations invite but ultimately frustrate the viewer's search for a rationale. Palermo's play with systems clearly resonated with the logic of collaborations, whose dialogical meanings are perpetually in the making. The changes of light central to the titles for the main metal series *Times of the Day* and *Himmelsrichtungen* provide at best a tentative, intuitive rationale for the changing intensities of colors in the bars and fields. Palermo's longstanding interest in light—specifically his work with windows and his conceptual incorporation of traveling sunlight into the wall painting for the Edinburgh College of Art—was important in that regard. But the diptych he had made with Richter, which paired represented with actual light, must have also been on Palermo's mind.

By setting into play established positions in American art, Palermo freed it from its own hermeticism. For Palermo, as for Richter, this playfulness and openness defined their identity as European artists. Their European model of meaning was, in Richter's words, "different" and "a little more complicated," while American artists were "so straight" and had to "simplify everything." This assessment was both right and wrong. American discourse about art during the 1960s was more complicated than the European writing. Europe had no Clement Greenbergs or Michael Frieds, no Donald Judds or Robert Smithsons. But much of this discourse's nuance was lost on Europeans bombarded with American art, lost even on many Americans by the end of the 1960s. Richter and Palermo's experience of themselves as other and different further attests to the way in which American art became something for European artists to define themselves against, an invitation to value their small and intimate art world, like the community around the Düsseldorf academy and the elective affinity between Palermo and Richter. The lack of clearly articulated positions in Germany and Europe allowed Palermo and Richter to define

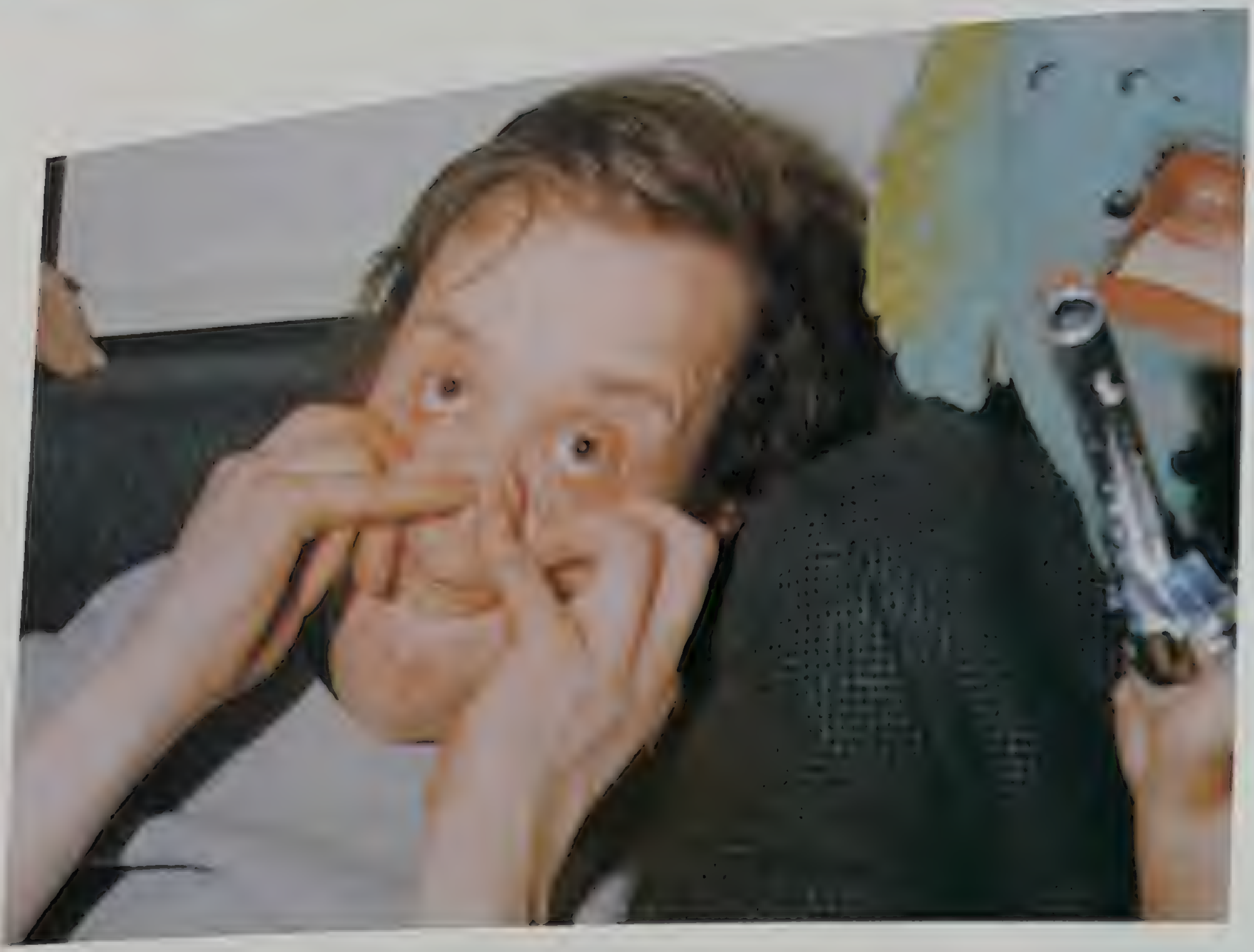


Fig. 160 Gerhard Richter, portrait of Palermo at Ratinger Hof, 1976. Photograph. © 2007 Gerhard Richter, Cologne.

themselves, to bond, and to play with the meanings of lightbulbs, monochromes, and other things.

In the end, Palermo returned to Europe, to Richter and other friends. Having lived in New York for two years, he decided in early 1976 to remain in Germany for a while. Surely he felt at home. He was back in touch with Beuys and had stayed at Knoebel's house for a while.[114] "We still visited each other then," Richter remembered. They also partied together; soon after Palermo's arrival, Richter took his friend's portraits again, now at a *Faschingsfest*, a carnival party at the bar Ratinger Hof—Blinky in drag, Blinky making faces (fig. 160). Perhaps they even still shared that "sense" about art. Richter recalls that Palermo's *Himmelsrichtungen* at the 1976 Venice Biennale "left a major impression on him when he saw the exhibition" and that he admired the "courageous, audacious" placement of the panels across the corners of the space. But the artifice in the dress-up portraits betrays Palermo's and Richter's different senses of a good party. As Richter described it, Palermo "slid off into this drug scene, and I was always a bit more stable." This was an old problem. "Palermo's binge drinking was heavy, and it actually hurt me—well, nothing to be done about it. When I talked to him about it, he always waved it off: 'Yeah, yeah, I'll quit soon.'"[115]

In the last months of his life Palermo moved into Richter's old studio.[116] This left him back in the same place where he and Richter had collaborated, the space they had returned to following their first trip to New York. Palermo was there alone now, but his experiences in that space with Richter informed his last major work. Fifteen paintings made of thirty-nine panels were among the work found at the Harkortstrasse studio after Palermo's untimely death, half installed, half leaning against the wall (fig. 161). Like Palermo's other metal pictures, *to the people of N.Y.C.* shows a European painter setting American models in play. Culturally specific colors become ambiguous: black, red, and yellow can read as the German national colors or as Native American color schemes.[117] From the perspective of a European painter, what would be Palermo's last dedication implies not just an homage but also a lesson: against aesthetic dogma, and both for and against national and continental differences in art.

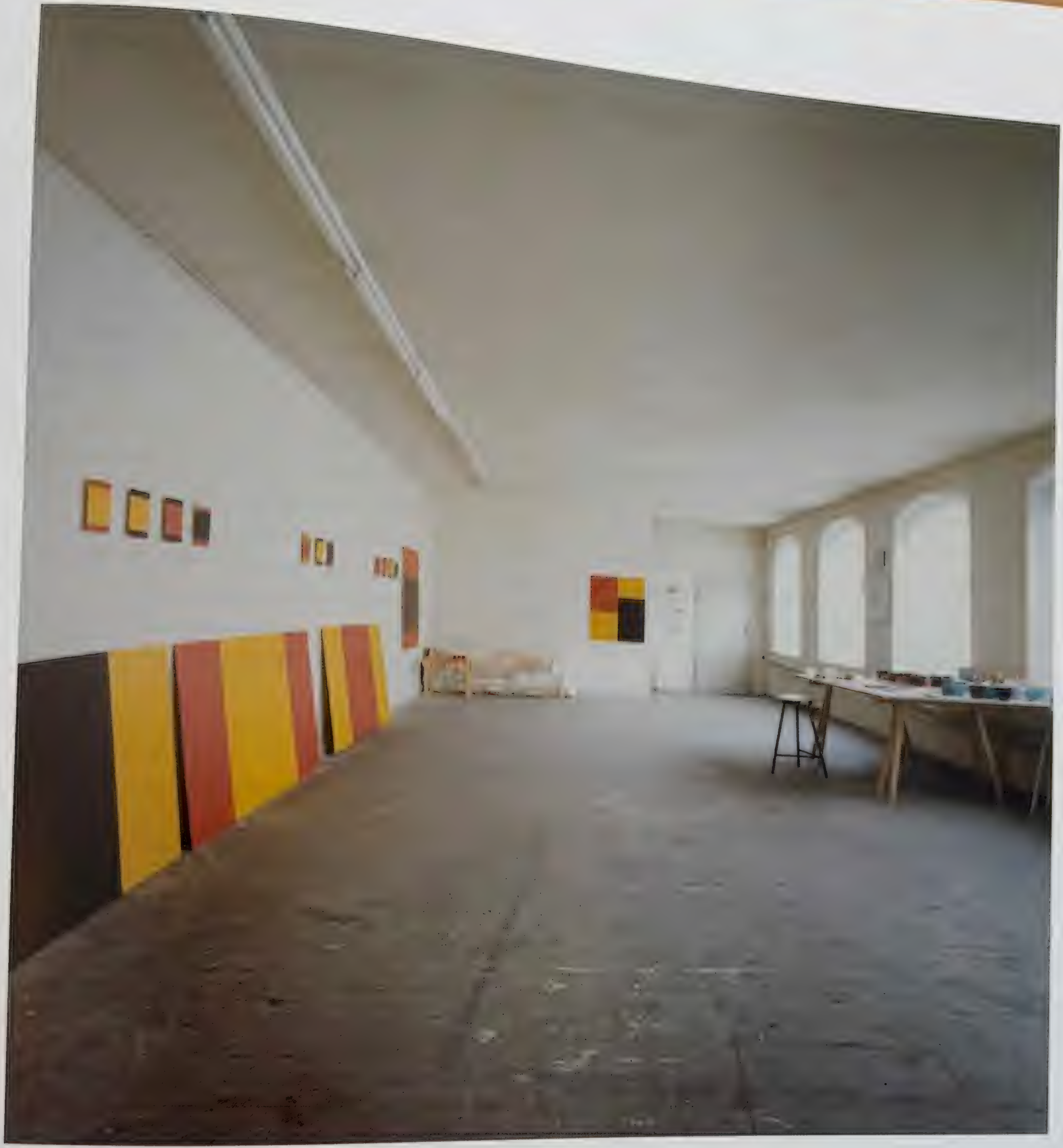


Fig. 161 *to the people of N.Y.C.* in Palermo's studio on Harkortstrasse, Düsseldorf, 1977

NOTES

Translations from the German are my own unless otherwise noted.

Chapter 1. Objects, 1964–1974

1. Wechsler, "Bescheidene Form von Schönheit," 3; Johannes Stüttgen, *Der Keilrahmen des Imi Knoebel. 1968/89* (Cologne: Walther König, 1991), 64. For the catalogue of the exhibition, see *Palermo. Objekte.* Apparently, Palermo started using the term *object* for this body of work only with this exhibition: the curator, Johannes Cladders, as paraphrased by Anne Rorimer, reports, "Palermo first had thought of designating the term *'Bild-Objekt'* (picture-object) for this purpose but later decided on the less cumbersome label"; Rorimer draws on the unpublished text "Einführung in die Ausstellung Palermo im Städtischen Museum Mönchengladbach," in Rorimer, "Palermo: Objects," 28–29, 35n4.

2. For a detailed account of the name change, see Glozer, "Gespräch zwischen Laszlo Glozer und Joseph Beuys," in *Palermo. Werke, 1963–1977*, reprinted with a short introduction as "Über Blinky Palermo" and "Gespräch zwischen Laszlo Glozer und Joseph Beuys." References to this source will cite the English translation by Joachim Neugroschel, published as Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo: A Conversation with Joseph Beuys." For the information that the name change was in part based on Heisterkamp's resemblance to Blinky Palermo see the biography in *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 129. Palermo's twin brother, Michael Heisterkamp, recently uncovered new information about their background, which is summarized in Moritz Wesseler, "Palermo: Known Facts and New Insights into His Person: Moritz Wesseler in Exchange with Robin Bruch, Kristin Heisterkamp, Michael Heisterkamp, and Babette Scobel," in *Palermo*, ed. Küper et al., 179–80. Pia Gottschaller has summarized the differing opinions regarding the proper way to address Palermo, as a person or as an artist, in Gottschaller, *Palermo: Inside His Images*, 16. Although Palermo signed his works "Palermo" rather than "Blinky Palermo," I have chosen to refer to him as "Blinky Palermo" in this book simply because this is how he has become best known as an artist.

3. For analogies between Palermo and James Dean, see Laura Arici's comment in Curiger, "Ein weiterer Blick," 87; Hollenstein, "Auf den Spuren eines Künstlermythos"; and Morisse, "'James Dean.'" Pia Gottschaller conducted numerous interviews with Palermo's family and friends for her 2004 study *Palermo: Inside His Images*. Although she focused on Palermo's materials and work process, she provides the most nuanced, scholarly account we have of Palermo's life and personality (see especially pages 16–29). Bernhart Schwenk's 1991 dissertation "Studien zur Person und zum Werk des Malers Blinky Palermo" presented the first scholarly account of Palermo's work; all subsequent studies of Palermo's work, including this one, are founded upon it. For Schwenk's account of Palermo's biography, see pages 19ff. and 41. For Palermo's biography see also Grosser, *Palermo*, 11–12.

4. Rein, "Farbflächen—Raumbilder." See also Sabine Grosser's excellent discussion in *Palermo*, 112–18. For the catalogue, see *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*.

5. Dahlem's contribution interweaves Palermo's art and life in a similar collage, implicitly connecting the development of Palermo's work to idiosyncratically chosen events; Franz Dahlem, "Das Axiometer ist der Richtungsweiser für das Steuerruder von Schiffen," in *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 129–32.

6. For example, Schwenk analyzed the circumstances surrounding Palermo's change of name, his death, and his much-cited "desperation"; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 37ff. See also his essay "Farbe als Mass für das Nicht Messbare," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 9. Other writers have pointed to the mythic aura surrounding Palermo's life and work; see, e.g., Rein, "Farbflächen–Raumbilder"; Buchloh, "Einheimisch, Unheimlich, Fremd," 169; Curiger, "Ein weiterer Blick," 83; and Burkamp, "Ordnung und Chaos zugleich."

In *Palermo: Inside His Images*, Pia Gottschaller argued that the term *legendary* was more appropriate than *mythical* to describe most previous accounts of Palermo's life and work, because a myth is defined as a "commonly believed false idea," whereas a "legend" refers to someone "famous and admired" (26). But surely we are dealing with a combination of the two, for several accounts of Palermo's life, work, and their implications are indeed false, as I demonstrate throughout this book.

7. For accounts of Palermo's silence, see Glozer, "Gespräch zwischen Glozer und Beuys," 62; Rorimer, "Palermo: Objects," 35; Alfred Nasarke, "Das blaue Auge sieht uns an"; and Schwenk and Denk, "Kleins Blaues Dreieck," n.p., n. 2.

For people expressing difficulties putting their experience of Palermo's work into words, see Thomas, "Eroberung der Wand von Farbe"; Johannes Cladders, "Pars Pro Toto," in *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, 10; Glozer, "Gespräch zwischen Glozer und Beuys," 65; Curiger, "Ein weiterer Blick," 84; Gerhard Richter, in *Gerhard Richter, Text. Schriften und Interviews*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Frankfurt: Insel, 1993), 63; Buchloh, "Einheimisch, Unheimlich, Fremd," 169; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 12; and Grosser, *Palermo*, 13, 18ff., 38.

8. See, for example, Gerhard Richter's recent recollections in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* which I discuss in Chapter 5.

9. Gottschaller responded to my description of this problem in my dissertation by arguing that no analysis of the work is possible without further research into Palermo's biography; see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 28–29. Although Palermo's biography is important for the insights it can yield about his working methods and thoughts, and although Gottschaller has turned up important new material by interviewing many of Palermo's friends and colleagues—my scholarship has greatly benefited from hers—I maintain that a broad historical approach based on a detailed examination of the art itself is most likely to spark a necessary change in thinking about Palermo's work.

In keeping with the generalities essential to myth, discussions of the purported manifestation of Palermo's life in his objects or in other works are rarely explicit; frequent references to its existentialist dimension tend to be facile, general, and vague. Palermo "sought the existential" and was "an emotional existentialist," we are told; his work exhibits "authenticity" and attests to the artist's "crises," his "loneliness" and "solitude," his "vulnerability" and his "mental and physical suffering." Emotional and sensual qualities are frequently used to describe the work—forms are said to originate in an "emotional abstraction," the work is a "sensual painterly form of Minimalism," an appeal to our "sensual experience." These descriptions appear, in order of citation, in the following sources: Dieter Ronte, "Über den Versuch als Künstler zu leben," in *Palermo. Bilder, Objekte, Zeichnungen*, 3; Laura Arici, "Narcisse et Echo," in *Palermo: Oeuvres, 1963–1977*, 72; Dahlem, "Neuland ist das Territorium der Kunst," in *Blinky Palermo, 1943–1977*, 16; Max Wechsler, "Palermo," in *Blinky Palermo, 1943–1977*, 35; Graevenitz, "Ein stiller Ketzer"; Arici, "Narcisse et Echo," 72; Radziewsky, "Unsagbar und unsehbar"; Siegfried Gohr, "German Art Since 1960," in *Museum Ludwig Cologne*, 249; Georg Jappe, "Young Artists in Germany," *Studio International* 183 (February 1972): 68; Eva Schmidt, "Materialität/Visualität: Bild/Objekt," 180.

10. Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 60, translation slightly altered.

11. *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*. Henceforth Palermo's works will be referred to by "*Wvz*" and the illustration number. The works in question here are *Wvz* 202–23 and 1. Thordis Moeller worked for Palermo's long-time dealer Heiner Friedrich in Munich starting in 1967 and directed the Cologne branch of the gallery from 1970 to 1980. She followed Palermo's work extensively and became friends with him.

12. See *Wvz* 3–13, 226–29, 233–40, 243–47.

13. Anne Rorimer pointed to the influence on Palermo of Goller's fragmented ornamental worlds in "Palermo: Objects," 32. In "Aufarbeitung eines Lebenswerkes," Wolfgang Stauch-v. Quitzow rightly remarked that Goller taught Palermo that painting was still possible. Bernhart Schwenk claims that Palermo's first teacher influenced his careful color choices, his control of the image process and slow working method, his sensitivity to the everyday, the equation of figuration and abstraction, and his simple monumentality; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 145–47. On Klapheck, see my "Supergegenständlichkeit. Der Maschinenmaler Konrad Klapheck," *Texte zur Kunst* (June 2003).

14. There is a great deal of often anecdotal literature on various aspects of the Düsseldorf art scene, but Georg Jappe's accounts are particularly thorough; see Jappe, "Die Künstlermetropole," *Düsseldorf. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Gäste der Landeshauptstadt* 3 (1968): 15ff., and "Die Republik der Einzelgänger: Düsseldorf—Zentrum der Künstler," *Kunstjahrbuch* 1 (1970): 22–27.

For the first major exhibitions about the Düsseldorf art scene, see *Düsseldorfer Szene; STRATEGY: GET ARTS;* and *Konstcen Düsseldorf*, exh. cat. (Helsinki: Ateneum, and Åbo: Konstmuseum, 1972). An important later exhibition and catalogue is *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*.

A main source on Zero art is *Zero aus Deutschland, 1957–1966, und Heute*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000). On the Creamcheese bar, see Tiziana Caianiello, *Der Lichtraum (Hommage à Fontana) und das CREAMCHEESE im museum kunst palast. Zur Musealisierung der Düsseldorfer Kunstszene der 1960er Jahre* (Bielefeld:

transcript, 2005), 95–163; Stephan von Wiese, "Creamcheese—Eine Kneipe als Forum der Kunst," in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, 120–21; my "Creamcheese, or the Art of Being Minor," in *The Metal Party*, ed. Josiah McElheny (New York: Public Art Fund, 2002); and Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 30.

15. For the history of Düsseldorf's art academy, see *200 Jahre Kunstakademie Düsseldorf*, ed. Eduard Trier (Düsseldorf: Ernst Forberg Stiftung, 1973), esp. 209–12; Volker Rattemeyer, "Kunstakademien. Ihre Bedeutung für die Kunstentwicklung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland am Beispiel von Karlsruhe und Düsseldorf," in *1945–1985. Kunst in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1985), 646–56; Heinrich Theissing, "Kunstakademie Düsseldorf—Vornehmster Ruhmestitel," in *Kunst in Düsseldorf*, ed. Helga Meister (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1988), 44ff.; and Ekkehard Mai, "Kunst lehren, mit der Kunst leben: Kunsthochschulen in NRW—Umrisse," in *Zeitzeichen. Stationen Bildender Kunst in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, ed. Karl Ruhrberg (Cologne: DuMont, 1989), 191–203.

16. The flier for the *Klasse Beuys* exhibition as well as reviews, largely restricted to the local newspapers, are collected and accessible in the Stadtarchiv Trier. For the Frankfurt exhibition see *Mit—Neben—Gegen. 3 Tage Frankfurter Kunstverein*, ed. Gerresheimer Berichte (Oldenburg: n.p., 1976); *Zeitung Kunst und Museen in Frankfurt am Main* 5 (1976); and Georg Bussmann, "Mit, neben, gegen—oder 'Die Kunst ist lange bildend, eh sie schön ist,'" in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, 130–41. On Beuys as a teacher see Petra Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen. Die Schüler von Joseph Beuys* (Düsseldorf: Richter, 2000), 17ff., 161ff., 190–91; Cornelia Lauf, "Joseph Beuys: The Pedagogue as Persona" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1992); *Beuys zu Ehren*, ed. Armin Zweite, exh. cat. (Munich: Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, 1986); *Ohne die Rose tun wir's nicht: für Joseph Beuys*, ed. Klaus Staeck (Heidelberg: Edition Staeck, 1986); *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf;* and *Beuys und seine Schüler*, exh. cat. (Bad Münstereifel: Galerie Klein, 1999).

17. As early as 1966, Beuys seems to have thought of his teaching as part of his artwork. See Manfred de la Motte, "Plastik in Deutschland," *Art International* 10 (15 September 1966): 27; Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 254ff. One could nevertheless argue that the significance of these later public activities lessens when we take into account the general debates about higher education generated by the student movement and, more important, the specific debates about the art academy. See, e.g., Siegfried Neuenhausen, "Kunststudenten von heute an Kunsthochschulen von gestern: Berichte und Reformvorschläge," *Kunst und Unterricht* 1 (September 1968): 32–33; and the newsletter of the Düsseldorf academy, *Nachrichten. Bilder. Berichte. Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf*, which has many articles on this subject.

18. Beuys's later revolt against limiting class sizes thus actually subverted his own efficacy as a teacher, as the Beuys scholar Gene Ray pointed out in commenting on this chapter in an email to the author, 16 April 2007. The class system at German art schools differs from that at American art schools in that students are admitted into a class by and for a specific faculty member and spend most of their time in that faculty member's classroom. They do not enroll in the wide range of classes with the wide range of faculty common in the United States.

All the students named in the text, with the exception of Sieverding who came after Palermo left, were at one point or another his fellow students. But they did not all overlap or begin in the same class, as is often suggested in the general student lists and by the period divisions in Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 97n413 and 161n596. A detailed list of the students' enrollment at the academy (as well as of faculty tenures) is included in *Akademierundgang, 1950–1988*. For Polke's role in Beuys's class, see Gislind Nabakowski, "Erinnerungen an die Jahre 1966 bis 1971 mit und um Beuys," in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, 103; Ulrike Rosenbach's memories relayed in Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 176n663. For Kiefer's visits, see Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 68n275; Mark Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987), 12–14.

19. Dates are based on Palermo's records in the academy archives. See also Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 27. Richter's information that Palermo was in Beuys's class as early as 1962 is incorrect; see Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 147n559. Franz Dahlem is also incorrect in claiming that he began in October 1963; see Dahlem, "Das Axiometer ist der Richtungsweiser für das Steuerruder von Schiffen," 129.

20. See Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 69, 102, 161; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 25; and Nabakowski, "Erinnerungen an die Jahre 1966 bis 1971," 102.

21. Beuys, quoted in Hans-Joachim Schyle, "Steine klopfen und Gräber schmücken," *Saarbrücker Zeitung* (28 April

1969). Nabakowski quotes Beuys as saying that "everyone here works on [his or her] own system, which is open-ended," in Nabakowski, "Erinnerungen an die Jahre 1966 bis 1971," 101. Johannes Stüttgen, a well-known student from Beuys's later years at the academy, writes that Beuys stressed the peculiarities of each student, which allowed him to work with students as different as Palermo and Norbert Tadeusz; see Stüttgen, "Die Lehrtätigkeit von Joseph Beuys," in *Joseph Beuys. Tagung Basel 1.–4. Mai 1991*, ed. Volker Harlan et al. (Basel: Wiese, 1991), 126. See also Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 62, 71, 87. It should be noted that Richter's book, with its extensive documentation of Beuys's actual teaching practice based on interviews with former students, moves significantly away from widespread generalizations about Beuys's teaching philosophy. For example, Richter determined that Beuys's early teaching methods were fairly harsh and authoritarian, a style that gradually disappeared as the number of students grew; Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 73ff., 76.

22. Palermo, Statement for "Jeder Mensch," 156.

23. Joseph Beuys in Georg Jappe, "Nicht einige wenige sind berufen, sondern alle. Interview mit Joseph Beuys über ästhetische Erziehung," *Kunstnachrichten* 9, no. 6 (February 1973): n.p. See also Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 57ff., 70.

24. Jörg Immendorff, quoted in Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 288. See also "Of Politics and Painting: Robert Storr interviews Jörg Immendorff," *Art in America* (June–July 2005): 135.

25. Some students even remember Beuys hiding his work from them. See Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 55–56, 102–3; Nabakowski, "Erinnerungen an die Jahre 1966 bis 1971," 102, 104–5; and Johannes Stüttgen, "Die Lehrtätigkeit," 126–27.

26. On Raum 19, see Johannes Stüttgen, "Der Ganze Riemen—Imi & Imi 1964–1969," reprinted and slightly revised in Martin Schulz, *Imi Knoebel. Die Tradition des gegenstandslosen Bildes* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 1998), 147; Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 99, 147, 286. For Knoebel's *Raum 19* specifically, see, for example, Hubertus Gassner, "Imi Knoebel—Raum 19," in *Deutschlandbilder*, 289–92.

For the strange lack of literature on Beuys's color Braunkreuz, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 46. Palermo himself used a Braunkreuz type of color in various works in a reference to Beuys; see, for example, *Wvz* 37 or the fat brown chalk lines and paint on the tape recorder for the *Blockade* wall drawing, discussed in Chapter 3.

For the sense of community around Palermo, the variety of student work, and Beuys's open mind toward art that was radically different from his own, see Nabakowski, "Erinnerungen an die Jahre 1966 bis 1971," 103, 101. Beuys suggested inviting Ellsworth Kelly to teach at the academy; see "Die Ideale Akademie," miscellaneous texts by Beuys et al., *Interfunktionen* 2 (1969): 62.

27. See Rainer, "Begabt und unfertig"; Arici, "Narcisse et Echo," 84; Pohlen, "Kunst für die Gesellschaft"; and Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 60, 64. According to Stüttgen, Palermo was a founding member of the German Student Party; see Stüttgen, *Der Keilrahmen des Knoebel*, 44. Peter Weiermair also sees a relation to Beuys in Palermo's alleged efforts to change the consciousness of his viewers; see Weiermair, "Überlegungen zum Werk von Joseph Beuys, Imi Knoebel, Wolfgang Laib, Blinky Palermo," in *German Art. Aspekte Deutscher Kunst*, 111. Wolfgang Stauch-v. Quitzow sees Palermo continuing an expanded art concept; see Stauch-v. Quitzow, "Aufarbeitung eines Lebenswerkes."

28. Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 62.

29. Klein explained that "as Palermo's teacher, [Beuys] surely chose for his own edition the photograph in which he himself was seen as '*grösser*' [literally meaning 'larger' but implying 'more significant']". As Klein elaborated, he bought these two portraits from the photographer Digne M. Marcovicz immediately following the exhibition events, which he himself had attended. A few years after Palermo's death, perhaps on the occasion of the upcoming retrospective at the Galerie-Verein, Klein approached Beuys with the two photographs and Beuys agreed to make an edition of one of them. Klein stressed that Beuys "very quickly" chose between the two and then specified size and printer. Beuys signed all the prints of the edition, but he also signed the two original photographs, which are in Klein's collection; Klein, Emails to the author, 1 and 2 December 2006. For the edition, see *Joseph Beuys: The Multiples*, ed. Jörg Schellmann (Munich: Edition Schellmann, 1997), ill. 335.

30. For the exhibition, see *Alfred Schmela*, ed. Karl Ruhrberg (Cologne: Wienand, 1996), 52–53.

31. The price list for the exhibition in the Galerie Schmela archive lists Palermo, *Komposition*, 1965, for 800 DM; Galerie Schmela archive, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, Los Angeles, Box 10, Folder 12. Since the archive arrived at the Getty only recently, the cataloguing information is preliminary. Schwenk claims that the work is lost and was entitled *Weisser Streifen auf weissem Grund*

(White Stripe on White Ground); see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 27. I have been unable to identify any work by Palermo with certainty based on this information and the photographic documentation of the exhibition in the Galerie Schmela archive, although it is accompanied by diagrammatic identifications of most of the artists; Galerie Schmela archive, Box 25, Folder 21. The work may be *Komposition mit 5 Linien* (Composition with Five Lines), 1964, *Wvz* 250, a drawing made of five vertical pencil lines that create six stripes in the spaces between them, mounted on a significantly larger white board, which could have been referred to at some point as *Weisse Streifen auf weissem Grund* (White Stripes on a White Ground). Its small size would explain why it is not identifiable in the photographs. In a review of Palermo's first solo exhibition six months later, the critic Peter Bode, in a probable allusion to Palermo's inclusion in the *Weiss—Weiss* show, argued that Palermo's works had abandoned the interplay between materiality and immateriality that had emerged there, moving too far toward the former without being able to transcend their materials. Palermo's materials, in Bode's opinion, referred merely to themselves: "These childishly painted woods [*läppisch bemalten Hölzchen*], like the rhombus pictures, which are sewn from silk and appear insensitive, telling us nothing but that they are made of silk, conclude the foolish work of a beginner. . . . The white Palermo desires is not white, but now only gray" (Bode, "Rückwärtsgewandte Moderne"). Palermo had already renounced the transcendence embodied by pure white, a practice he was to follow in his subsequent objects.

32. Bode, "Rückwärtsgewandte Moderne." It seems unlikely that the photograph of Palermo works identified in the 1980 exhibition catalogue as "view into the exhibition space of Galerie Friedrich & Dahlem, Munich 1966" (*Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 18) is of this 1966 exhibition; most of the objects in the photograph are dated later in Moeller's catalogue raisonné. If the photograph represents a view of Palermo's 1967 exhibition, the only other plausible choice, several dates for the works shown would need to be revised. The photograph is flipped, as can be determined by the untitled cloth picture dedicated to Gerhard Richter (*Wvz* 86). My research into what type of exhibition this photograph represents has remained inconclusive.

33. For slightly different accounts of Palermo's first encounter with his dealers, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 19n55; Küper, "Palermo," 27n57. See also Grosser, *Palermo*, 59. Schwenk claims that Richter and Polke arranged the meeting; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 28.

34. See Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 11. Sabine Grosser believes that Palermo's popularity despite his young age was largely owing to his affiliation with Beuys; see Grosser, *Palermo*, 89.

35. Curator Gerhard Storck reports that the idea stemmed from a dealer; see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 8. The exhibition catalogue came in the form of a box that held a set of loose cards, each with a reproduction of one of Palermo's objects. The first two cards contained a brief introduction to the exhibition by curator Johannes Cladders, a brief biography, and a picture of the artist beside one of his wall paintings. The third card carried a two-page passage from *Ulysses;* see *Palermo. Objekte*. The *Ulysses* connection between Beuys and Palermo is made by Anna Klapheck in "Bilder ohne Rahmen." For Beuys's proposal to extend the novel, see Götz Adriani et al., *Joseph Beuys* (Cologne: DuMont, 1994), 61. A high school friend of Palermo's, Herbert Nolte, recalls that Franz Dahlem helped put the catalogue together; see Nolte, Interview about Palermo.

36. The title of the photograph, *Widenmayerstrasse*, refers to the space where the organizers unpacked the work for the exhibition *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976;* Thordis Moeller, Conversation with the author, 5 October 2007.

37. Beuys in conversation with Amine Haase in her *Gespräche mit Künstlern* (Cologne: Wienand, 1981), 30. Palermo's assimilation of Beuys's suggestive use of materials and forms has been cited as evidence of their artistic kinship, their ability to see meaningful forms in apparently insignificant objects or to think about material. See Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 16; Jean-Christophe Ammann, "Schweizer Brief," 67. Others cite a move beyond form, a sensibility for things, and the emotional nature of Palermo's abstraction. See Glozer, "Den Raum wie Leinwand benutzen"; Riese, "Das Ringen um absolute Form"; and Gohr, "German Art since 1960," 249. Various sources stress the impact on Beuys's students more generally of his emphasis on the meanings of materials. See Jean-Christophe Ammann, "Zur Ausstellung 'Düsseldorfer Szene'" (1969), reprinted in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, 123; Christiansen, "Beuys' Boys." See also the suggestive juxtaposition of quotations by Beuys and Palermo in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 29.

38. See Dahlem, "Das Axiometer ist der Richtungsweiser für das Steuerruder von Schiffen," 130. This strong break in terms of styles or ways of working was also the case for many other students of Beuys; see Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 282.

39. Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 60, translation slightly altered.

40. The early nonobjective works are *Wvz* 239–42. It should be noted here that, as Thordis Moeller writes in her introduction to *Werkverzeichnis*, the dates of many of Palermo's works remain uncertain. See *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*, 1:9.

41. The horizontal object (*Wvz* 15) is a little over a meter long, and painted green with some blue added in a manner reminiscent of a wood grain. Palermo rarely used the horizontal format for his objects thereafter, probably because it suggested horizons and landscapes, although he did return to it explicitly a couple of years later in a two-part object entitled *Landschaft* (Landscape; fig. 26) and implicitly in his cloth pictures.

42. See Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 103; Nabakowski, "Erinnerungen an die Jahre 1966 bis 1971," 102. For photographs of the exhibition installation and performance as well as reviews, see *Alfred Schmela*, ed. Ruhrberg, 53–56. Palermo probably was in the audience too. A photograph of the crowd at the opening shows a bald young man who is probably Palermo standing near Heiner Friedrich. Photograph in Galerie Schmela archive, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, Box 25, Folder 17, Photograph 451.

43. Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 62, translation slightly altered.

44. Although Beuys's description above conflates several events and gives an incorrect title, we can derive from the information given that Palermo attended the *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, which included these performances by Beuys as well as performances by "Cage and other Americans." By "*The Red Cross on the Felt Piano*," Beuys meant his *Infiltration Homogen für Konzertflügel, der grösste Komponist der Gegenwart ist das Contergankind* (Infiltration Homogeneous for Grand Piano, the Greatest Composer of the Present Is the Conterganchild), which involved a piano wrapped in felt with a red cross on it, with which Beuys interrupted a concert performed by Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik. Palermo can be identified in two photographs by Reiner Ruthenbeck of this concert on 7 July 1966. See *Reiner Ruthenbeck. Fotografie, 1956–1976*, ed. Brigitte Wontora (Stuttgart: Cantz, 1991), 130, 133. Palermo may also have attended the performance by Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, which took place 24 October 1964, although Beuys did not perform on that occasion. Beuys does not mention Palermo's attendance at the *Festival der Neuen Kunst*, but he can be identified sitting with Gerhard Richter in the audience for the event in figure 126. Palermo can also be identified in the video made at the *Festival der Neuen Kunst*, which was on view at the 1997 exhibition *Deutschlandbilder*, curated by Eckhart Gillen at the Martin-Gropius Bau in Berlin.

45. For accounts of the performance see Adriani et al., *Joseph Beuys*, 64; Uwe Schneede, *Joseph Beuys. Die Aktionen* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1994), 42–67, esp. 48; Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), 90; Adam Oeller, "Fluxus at the Border: Aachen, July 20, 1964," in *Deutschlandbilder*, 236–37; and Gene Ray, "Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray (New York: D.A.P., 2001).

46. Examples of the appearance of the staff in other performances and actions include a copper rod combined with felt that played a central role in Beuys's *Der Chef, Fluxus Gesang*, performed in August and December 1964 in Copenhagen and Berlin; an elongated walking stick used in his television performance *Das Schweigen von Marcel Duchamp wird überbewertet* (The Silence of Marcel Duchamp Is Overrated) in December 1964; a rod construction with a dead rabbit in *Eurasia: Siberische Symphonie* (Eurasia: Siberian Symphony) in 1966; and a staff and several leaning vertical elements in his *Eurasienstab* (Eurasian Staff) performances after 1967. For accounts and photographs of these performances, see Schneede, *Beuys. Die Aktionen*, 68–79, 80–83, 102–11, 126–45, 186–201. See also the film recording of the *Eurasienstab* performance at the Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp in 1967 included with the publication *Joseph Beuys. Eurasienstab* (Berlin: Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, 2005).

47. The form of the pole appeared as early as 1961 in the sculpture *Horns*, consisting of two one-and-a-half-meter-long poles crowned with a pair of rhinoceros horns leaning against the wall, which were strongly suggestive of totem poles, especially in combination with plastic tubes filled with red liquid. Another, untitled sculpture of 1961 consists of two wooden slats, one leaning against the corner of a room, the other extending at a right angle from its upper end, with an inscribed arrow that is reminiscent of the green cross on Palermo's first staff. For *Horns*, see Adriani et al., *Joseph Beuys*, 47. For the other early piece, see *Kunst der 60er und 70er Jahre aus Bonner Privatbesitz*, 77. Beuys's *Gundfana des Westens—Dschingis Khans Flagge* (Gundfana of the West—Genghis Khan's Flag; 1961–70) bears most resemblance to Palermo's combination of a staff with another element. It consists of a thick branch leaning against the wall with two round emblems added at its top and bottom ends and a large flaglike element hanging next to it on the wall. See the illustration in *Transit. Joseph Beuys, Plastische Arbeiten und Zeichnungen, 1947–1985* (Krefeld: Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, 1991), 154.

48. For the angles and their exhibitions, see *Joseph Beuys. Documenta, Arbeit*, ed. Veit Loers et al. (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum, 1993), 65, 71–76. Beuys conspicuously displayed the vertical elements in his 1965 Schmela exhibition, where they were close to ceiling height, leaning against the walls of the gallery's fairly small room. Another sculpture in the exhibition also included vertical elements: a set of three long branches laid underneath a pile of felt sheets in the sculpture *Schneefall* (Snowfall), arranged in the center of the gallery (see fig. 16).

49. See Krüger, "Aus farbigen Stoffen"; Buchloh, "Einheimisch, Unheimlich, Fremd," 172. It seems that Palermo's object may have inspired K. H. Hödicke's *Blaue Scheibe* (Blue Disk) of 1967, reproduced in *Kunstmarkt 68*, ed. Verein progressiver deutscher Kunsthändler (Cologne: Verein progressiver deutscher Kunsthändler, 1968).

50. Palermo's playful and/or boring use of objects may have been inspired or encouraged by Robert Morris's performances *Arizona* and *Site*, which Palermo perhaps saw performed on 24 October 1964 at the Düsseldorf art academy. See note 44, above.

51. In an interview with Amine Haase, Beuys noted explicitly, "In my work itself there is a basic principle, which moves away from art in the sense of objects or art in the sense of style" (Haase, *Gespräche mit Künstlern*). Briony Fer has offered a similar argument with respect to Palermo's drawings. "Whilst in Beuys watercolor seems to enact the myth of Becoming, in Palermo, these expressive gestures are made far more casual and inadvertent, stripping the gesture of its mythic dimension" (Fer, *Infinite Line*, 203).

Walter Ehrmann argues against the fetish and ritual aspects in Palermo's works in Ehrmann, "Anmerkungen zur Druckgraphik von Palermo," in *Palermo. Druckgraphik*, 11; Jürgen Schmidt believes that there is something arbitrary about the staffs in Palermo; see Schmidt, "Palermo hat seinen Platz." Peter Bode calls them *läppisch* (silly and unimportant), in Bode, "Rückwärtsgewandte Moderne." An untitled staff object of 1964–67 (*Wvz* 50), discussed below, is entitled *Totem* in Palermo's catalogue for the object exhibition in Mönchengladbach; see *Palermo. Objekte*, n.p., as well as in *The Image of Abstraction* and Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 65.

Gottschaller has argued that the similarities between Palermo's and Beuys's works are largely superficial because their differences are more important in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 54. I argue instead that the differences are essential to understanding that Palermo's use of Beuysian elements is a response to Beuys. Gottschaller further concurs with Schwenk that the staff, especially in *Schmetterling I* (1967), is related as much to Barnett Newman's zips as it is to Beuys's staffs; see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 55, and Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 33. I disagree with this assessment, mainly because I do not see Palermo's staff functioning in similarly perceptually ambiguous ways as Newman's zips. Palermo's staff is always clearly a figure on the ground of the wall; Newman's zips are embedded in their field and impossible to isolate as figures. Newman had a profound impact on Palermo, but it showed in his work only later, after Palermo had moved beyond Beuysian and German modes of art making. On Newman, see Yve-Alain Bois, "Perceiving Newman," in Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 187–213.

52. See *Wvz* 24, 30, 33, 198; *Wvz* 14, 30; *Wvz* 197, 160.

53. Rinn and Glozer both see these objects as a synthesis of Palermo's objects and wall paintings; see Rinn, "Palermo," 116, and Glozer, "Den Raum wie Leinwand benutzen." See also Grosser, *Palermo*, 177.

54. The vertical element in the 1969 version is treated similarly but juxtaposed with a planar element typical of Palermo's two-part objects. The red edges are not visible in the illustration of the earlier object (*Wvz* 52) in the *Werkverzeichnis*, but they are clearly visible in installations of the work and also in the illustration in Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 49. An interest in conveying the spiritual effects of color is central, by contrast, to a set of works on paper by Beuys reproduced in *The Spiritual in Abstract Painting, 1890–1985*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), 316. Given Palermo's interest in American art, Dan Flavin's fluorescent light sculptures may have influenced his experimentation with these reflections—Flavin's works create strikingly similar effects and were first exhibited in Germany at Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, Cologne, in the fall of 1966. I am grateful to Sydney Skelton for the comparison to Flavin.

55. Although the work is reproduced on the poster for the exhibition, I was unable to determine from my research into the exhibition photographs at the Trier archive whether it was in fact exhibited; see the exhibition poster in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, 138. There is documentation for another Palermo work in the exhibition: Stüttgen recalls that Chris Kohlhöfer drew a line between windows for the exhibition, as ordered by Palermo; see Stüttgen, *Der Keilrahmen des Knoebel*, 61.

56. For a summary of Beuys's use of the cross see the entry in the "Beuysnobiscum," in *Joseph Beuys*, ed. Harald Szeemann, exh. cat. (Zurich: Kunsthaus, 1993), 269–70.

57. For the two Ts, see *Wvz* 39 and 41. The latter is listed but not illustrated in the *Werkverzeichnis;* it can be found in *Pro Lidice. 52 Künstler aus Deutschland*. The two components have different finishes (shiny on top and matte below). Palermo's T is more closely related to the T shapes in Knoebel's *Raum 19*. Interesting in this context, too, are Palermo's drawings, two of which picture an actual cross placed centrally on the paper (*Wvz* 264 and 309). Apparently Palermo chose not to pursue the cross shape in his objects. Another drawing, *Fensterkreuz II* (Window Cross II; *Wvz* 308), shows a cross oriented sideways, and its figurative potential here (of representing a window) is another way in which the aura of the cross is undermined, although again this is something the artist chose not to pursue. It seems unclear in this context what is the origin or fate of a large cross object that is shown in a photograph of Palermo by Ute Klophaus. This may be a cross that Palermo found in his neighborhood (which seems likely) or an object he destroyed. For the picture, see *Palermo: Oeuvres, 1963–1977*, 73.

58. See Gottschaller's transcription of the full diagram in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 96. The discovery of the diagram is important, especially in light of the scarce evidence we have of how Palermo thought about his work. It helped me refine my reading of *Für J. Beuys/unvollendet*. Fred Jahn noted soon after Palermo's death that the artist planned to create an edition of ten based on this work; see Jahn, "Für eine Ausstellung," in *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 137.

59. In other words, I believe the inclusion of *unvollendet* as part of the title may indicate that the work is actually finished and that its designation as "unfinished" is part of its meaning. Alternately, and in more practical terms, the piece perhaps remained unfinished because Palermo withdrew his work from the exhibition while it was being set up (as did other students) because of the tumult surrounding the concept and installation of the exhibition. See Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 20. Schwenk argues that the title of the work was intended to show admiration for Beuys but that the piece itself was not meant as a tribute; see Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 16.

Compare Gottschaller's more extensive reading in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 96–100. Earlier I proposed a reading of the work as a retrospective view but thought of the central panel as a representation of Palermo's cloth pictures; see my "Blinky Palermo: Painting in Germany and America." That reading does not hold well in light of the diagram and in the absence of any representation within this work of the wall paintings. However, I hesitate to rely on the diagram too heavily for several reasons: first, it may have been sketched while the actual work was in progress or being thought about, but its ultimate relation to the final work cannot be determined; second, although Gottschaller described the diagram as a "concise insight" and "very instructive," I would conclude that it is ultimately unclear given the uncertainties about the inscribed dates and ordinal directions, which Gottschaller points to as well; third, in light of the few written documents we have of Palermo's thinking about his art, it is difficult to determine how important they are in the development of his art.

60. As Beuys acquired more students, fewer of them seemed capable of this kind of departure, and Beuys's individual attention to them lessened. See Petra Richter's accounts of the increasing numbers of student imitations of Beuys's work in Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 192.

61. Many have argued that Palermo's knowledge of Romanticism was filtered through Beuys; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 159; Semff, "Hymn to the Night—for Novalis," 458. On Beuys's relationship to Romanticism, see Theodora

Vischer, *Beuys und die Romantik* (Cologne: Walther König, 1983). However, Ursula Reuter reports that Palermo was unfamiliar with Novalis until 1967, after graduation from the academy. Reuter is quoted in an email to me of 7 September 2007 by Julia Klüser, cited in a letter to the present owner of the drawing.

62. Reuter cited from a letter to the present owner of the drawing by Julia Klüser, Email to the author. Reuter's works are reproduced in Christiansen, "Beuys' Boys," 21. Michael Semff also clarified some of the circumstances of the drawing following conversation with Christiansen. He argues that the drawing was made after the object, given Christiansen's recollection that Palermo visited them in Copenhagen during the summer of 1967; see Semff, "'Hymn to the Night—for Novalis,'" 457–60. The catalogue raisonné lists the date as c. 1966; see *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis.*

63. Christiansen, "Beuys' Boys," 22. Palermo's interest in German Romanticism resurfaced several years later, first in the allusion to Romantic friendship portraits in his 1971 wall painting collaboration with Gerhard Richter and later in his inclusion of a quotation from the painter Philipp Otto Runge in a catalogue for a wall painting exhibition at the Kunstverein in Hamburg; see *Palermo. Wandmalerei.*

64. Semff, "'Hymn to the Night—for Novalis,'" 459. We might add to Semff's list of Romantic qualities in Palermo's works the artist's signature use of the color blue, which became an emblem of Romanticism following Novalis's novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in which the title character searches for a blue cornflower.

65. Ibid., 457. Semff notes Novalis and Palermo's shared interest in nature, based on their expressed desires for a relation to nature, which in both cases results, in Semff's words, in a process that is "'alienating' in a 'pleasant' way, making an object alien and yet familiar and attractive." More generally speaking, the object quality of the objects has been seen as evidence for Palermo's close relation to nature (*Naturverbundenheit*) and his working process as "parallel" to nature. Some critics even trace the genealogy of his signature triangle to early landscapes in watercolor; see "Was ist das eigentlich—ein Bild?"; Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 26; and Stemmler, "Zu dieser Ausstellung," in *Palermo (Peter Heisterkamp)*, 105–6.

66. Other related objects include *Wvz* 15 and 21.

67. Imi Knoebel in Stüttgen, "Der Ganze Riemen," 148.

68. It is Nabakowski rather than Palermo who relates this experience to his art. While suggesting a relation between Palermo's art and nature, Nabakowski argues later in the article that his art is informed by the knowledge that "one cannot represent nature as a whole anymore, even if nature still exists as a whole" (Nabakowski, "Palermo," 6). See also Grosser, *Palermo*, 91–92. Hans Dickel as well has argued that Palermo's art is evidence of an alienated perception of nature; see Dickel, "Kunst-Stoff von Blinky Palermo," 84.

69. See Novalis, *Fragmente*, ed. Ernst Kamnitzer (Dresden: Wolfgang Jess, 1929), 27; *Athenaeum, 1798–1800*, ed. August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1960). My understanding of the Jena circle is indebted to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (1978; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

70. Semff cites as further evidence Ute Klophaus's widely published photographs of the artist maneuvering some of his objects in front of a ruined wall near his studio, and he draws an extensive analogy to Mondrian's seascapes; see Semff, "'Hymn to the Night—for Novalis,'" 459. See also Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 66–69, 129–30, 155–57; Fer, *Infinite Line*, 193 and passim.

71. Sigmar Polke relayed these impressions of a policeman who visited Palermo's studio to Pia Gottschaller; see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 48n259. The specific origins of Palermo's found materials are usually difficult to determine. Schwenk states that Palermo used part of an old car door for *Tagtraum II*; see Schwenk, *Palermo. Pinakothek der Moderne*, 152.

72. An *Athenaeum* piece relates the fragment to a small work of art: "A fragment, like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself" (Fragment 206, in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971]).

73. Fred Jahn told Gottschaller that Palermo left the shape of the wooden piece used for *Graue Scheibe* unaltered; see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 50n268.

74. The original reads, "Krumme Linie—Sieg der freien Natur über die Regel. Alle krummen Linien entstehn nur durch sich selbst, wie Leben nur durch Leben entsteht" (Novalis, *Fragmente*, 322).

75. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh has objected to the image of Palermo as a Romantic and national artist; see Buchloh, "Einheimisch, Unheimlich, Fremd," 170. Helmut Kruschwitz rejects a Romantic reading of Palermo's work because he holds that it turned to infinity and not to the world; see Kruschwitz, “Farbe: übergreifende Struktur.”

76. With a triangle chopped to the point of unrecognizability, the notion of the fragment briefly returns in *Schmetterling II* (*Wvz* 109). But here it is juxtaposed with an element much less welcoming than in *Tagtraum II*, for the strictly vertical staff does not embrace its neighbor as the T shape had done, and its radiating red borders visually seal it from its surroundings. Over the course of the next four years, Palermo gives the staff more and more assertive, independent company, for shapes become more plain and intact, three-dimensional and contained; see, e.g., *Wvz* 132, 150, 164. The formations painted on the first of these still echo the muted brown and off-white colors of the staff. It seems likely that the untitled object made over a five-year period (*Wvz* 150) was put together from what were initially two independent works. This hypothesis is supported by the different materials, the relatively large space between the two members, and the initial title of this work—*Objekt mit Gouache* (Object with gouache)—used in the Mönchengladbach exhibition of Palermo’s objects. See Stemmler, “Zu dieser Ausstellung,” 107. The sense of an independent painting is also conveyed, less forcefully, in an untitled object from 1972 (*Wvz* 153, fig. 25), in which a fragmented shape appears for the last time. But this one is made of a different material (uncovered pressboard) and is painted in intense colors and circular shapes that clash with the adjacent plain black staff wrapped in cloth.

77. Once again this may have been filtered through Beuys, for the expressionist basis of his work is undeniable. Whether fact or fiction, the story of Beuys’s plane crash over the Crimean and his alleged rescue by tribesmen who wrapped him in felt and fat have long shaped Beuys’s own and the public’s understanding of his work, especially the very personal meanings of his use of these materials. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique,” *Artforum* 18 (January 1980): 35–43; and the recent scholarship by Gene Ray and Peter Nisbet, as well as Buchloh’s renewed take on Beuys, in *Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*. Some of Beuys’s early students recall him talking about his experience; see Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen*, 119.

78. Semff, “‘Hymn to the Night—for Novalis,’” 459. Roman Hollenstein read the piece as a “nightly romantic icon” (“Auf den Spuren eines Künstlermythos”).

79. Novalis, *Fragmente*, 342–43.

80. Semff, “‘Hymn to the Night—for Novalis,’” 458. Semff seems to imply here a connection to the subjective aesthetics of Romanticism at large. Alternatively, Max Wechsler links Palermo’s accomplishments at an early age, his constant search for truth, and his self-destructiveness to a Romantic conception of the artist; see Wechsler, “Bescheidene Form von Schönheit,” 3. For descriptions of Palermo’s work as poetic and lyrical, see also Rein, “Poetisch, musikalisch, politisch”; Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen, “Room as a Medium,” *Flash Art* 131 (December 1986–January 1987): 75; Stemmler, “Zu dieser Ausstellung,” 98; Schwenk, “Zweifel an den Idealen der Moderne,” 9; and the category for lyrical abstraction in the tables at the back of Hans-Jürgen Müller’s *Kunst kommt nicht von Können. Über die Schwierigkeiten beim Umgang mit zeitgenössischer Kunst. Ein Streifzug durch die sechziger Jahre* (Nuremberg: Belser, 1976). Such claims are evidence only of a general expressionist understanding of Palermo’s work.

81. In the Palermo literature we often read about the artist’s “painterly and individual handwriting,” the importance of experience, his *Ausdrucksmalerei*, or a painting of expression, and even more specifically about his supposed German expressionist heritage. Specific examples are the similarity of Palermo’s drawings to the work of Erich Heckel and of his expressive use of figure ground relations to the work of Wassily Kandinsky. See Schuster, “Blinky Palermo,” 124; Schwenk, “Studien zur Person,” 70; Nabakowski, “Palermo,” 3; Korzilius, “Du ‘Désespoir du bleuet,’” 861; Stemmler, “Zu dieser Ausstellung,” 97, 104; and *Farbe und Raum*, 34.

82. Compare Schwenk’s use of the term “skin” in describing the way the fabric wraps around the wood and the term “protective finish” for the paint in Schwenk, “Studien zur Person,” 70–71.

83. Nabakowski, “Palermo,” 6.

84. Buchloh first pointed to the denial of the gestures by means of the object character of the support in Buchloh, “Einheimisch, Unheimlich, Fremd,” 171. For the tension between gesture and objectness, see also Wechsler, “Bescheidene Form von Schönheit,” 6. For the banalization of the gesture, see also S. D. Sauerbier, “Die neue Malerei und ihre Kritik,” 121–22. Compare Gottschaller’s discussion of *Tagtraum*, which looks to her as if it had been made in haste, in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 48n259.

85. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), esp. sections “Vorrede” and “Der Geist.”

86. Donald Kuspit was the first to develop claims about the spiritual in Palermo's art, statements that run through the reception of Palermo's work but were often left unexplained, as if to mirror the works' alleged unexplainability. For Kuspit, Palermo's work "is an invitation to inward adventure, implying a general spiritual and medicinal purpose for art." Palermo's small boxes of 1969 and 1970 provide a convincing example—though not one that Kuspit discusses—for they suggest containers for spirits and relics, or, at the very least, a sense of mystery because they are closed, as in figure 35 and *Wvz* 106, 107, 108, 127, and 129. "Palermo reduced his own art material to a minimum—thin color on aluminum or paper, surrounded by space not simply vast but infinitized by the work's palpitating stillness and intimate scale," Kuspit notes, and Palermo's relentless use of prototypical shapes further "spiritually" confirms our being: "They are concrete signs of an obsessive concentration on absolute, and absolutely intelligible, form." In closing Kuspit turns to Palermo's color: "Palermo has given us a visual mantra in which color is elevated into a host of expectant consciousness" (Kuspit, "Blinky Palermo," 80).

Like Palermo's Romanticism, his use of the spiritual may have been filtered through Beuys, who insisted on a productive tension between material and immaterial, on our need to seek actively the spiritual we have lost, and on an "art that in principle communicates with a world that is of this earth and of a world beyond this one." Beuys's shamanistic conception of his art is relevant here, especially performances such as *Der Chef* (The Chief) and *wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt;* see Joseph Beuys, Interview with Horst Schwebel, in *Zeichen des Glaubens—Geist der Avantgarde. Religiöse Tendenzen in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Wieland Schmied, exh. cat. (Berlin: Schloss Charlottenburg, 1980), 204–5; Beuys quoted by Jürgen Morschel in Morschel, *Deutsche Kunst der 60er Jahre. Plastik, Objekte, Aktionen* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1972), 252–53. On the role of the spiritual in Beuys's work, see also Donald Kuspit, *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

87. Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 26; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 142; Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 24; Schwenk, "Blinky Palermo," 276; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 137; Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 9, 27, 24; Schwenk, "Blinky Palermo," 276. Schwenk discusses the concept of the aura in Palermo through Walter Benjamin's writing in Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 138.

88. Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 131.

89. Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 24, 26; Schwenk, "Blinky Palermo," 276; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 138; Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 24; Schwenk, "Blinky Palermo," 276; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 139.

90. See Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 119; Schwenk, "Blinky Palermo," 278.

91. For example, Palermo uses the "ur-linguistic power of the sign to charge a spatial situation with spiritual power" (Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 141).

92. Ibid., 140. See also Schwenk and Andreas Denk, "Kleins Blaues Dreieck," *Apex* 16 (1992), special issue on Galerie Klein, ed. Erhard Klein and Wolfgang Schulz. The Klein work is not included in the catalogue raisonné, but it is also illustrated in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 216. Dirk Stemmler wrote that "the blue triangle for Palermo is probably a sensual moment of entering realms of indeterminate distance" (Stemmler, "Zu dieser Ausstellung," 112). See also Küper, "Palermo," 50, 309–31.

93. Palermo took great interest in Malevich's work, as evidenced in his *Komposition mit 8 roten Rechtecken* (Composition with 8 Red Rectangles; *Wvz* 16) and mentioned by contemporaries; see, e.g., Stemmler, "Zu dieser Ausstellung," 100, 102; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 26–27, 160.

94. See also *Wvz* 44, 45, 71, 110, 526–29, 531, 584, 587, 594, 601. For the prints, see *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, cat. nos. 1, 3–5, 7. For drawings featuring the triangle motif, see *Wvz* 239, 292, 299–300, 333–35, 337, 344, 352, 389, 390, 436. Stemmler includes a detailed chronology of the triangle appearances between 1963 and 1975 in Stemmler, "Zu dieser Ausstellung," 111.

95. See also *Wvz* 71 and Palermo's prints in *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, cat. nos. 1, 4–6.

96. For the reproduction of the poster, see *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 4; for a transcription of the writing on the poster, see p. 141.

97. For the triangles, see *Wvz* 46, 69, 70, 47.

98. *Wassily Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (1982; New York: DaCapo, 1994), 142; see also 133, 137, 139ff. Gottschaller has argued that "the isolated positioning of Palermo's prototypes suggests that he was acquainted with Kandinsky's well-known concepts, but that he brushed aside their implications and pitfalls: that pure colour and form dissociated from nature alone would amount to geometrical ornaments, similar to a 'tie' or a 'carpet,' in other words that beauty alone is not a satisfactory, worthy aim for an artist" (*Palermo*, 35–36). I agree that Palermo was probably aware of Kandinsky's theories, as I shall discuss below, but I hesitate to concur with her argument, for the isolated positioning of shapes is inconsistent with Kandinsky's pictorial practice and occurs only in examples of his students' work at the Bauhaus.

Beuys used a triangle prominently in his 1962 collage *Signal* included in the catalogue for his 1963 *Stallausstellung* (Stable Exhibition) at the van der Grinten brothers' house. See *Joseph Beuys, Fluxus, aus der Sammlung van der Grinten*, exh. cat. (Kranenburg: Das Haus, 1963), fig. 191. It seems unlikely that Palermo saw the exhibition, but he may have come across the catalogue at a later point and would surely have been interested in the work given its use of the triangle and its title, owing to his interest in the German Signal painters.

99. *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, cat. no. 34.

100. Radziewsky, "Unsagbar und unsehbar."

101. See Jochen Hörisch, "'Übergang zum Endlichen': Zur Modernität des 'Heinrich von Ofterdingen,'" in Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, ed. Jochen Hörisch (1802; Frankfurt: Insel, 1982); Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 136ff. Not surprisingly then, Glozer uses the blue cornflower as the closing metaphor for Palermo's despair in his interview with Joseph Beuys, "On Blinky Palermo," 65.

102. *Kandinsky*, ed. Lindsay and Vergo, 182–83.

103. For Palermo's visit to the Stedelijk and his interest in Malevich's paintings there, see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 26–27. I have not been able to find any evidence that Malevich commented in writing on Kandinsky's theories.

104. Karin Thomas cites a Palermo reference to Klein in Thomas, "Eroberung der Wand mit Farbe."

105. See *Wvz* 47, 69, 171.

106. Martin Hentschel described the portrait as "three lines giving a physiognomic, slightly sullen expression" ("Die Ordnung des Heterogenen: Sigmar Polkes Werk bis 1986," Ph.D. diss., Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 1991, 313–14). The restaurant, Palermo Restauration, located on Beethovenstrasse in Leipzig, existed as of 2000 and used the blue triangle as its logo. For the blue triangle as a signature motif, see also Stemmler, "Zu dieser Ausstellung," 112. See also Stüttgen's use of the blue triangle in his drawings as a synonym for Palermo in the illustrations at the back of *Der Keilrahmen des Knoebel*. Gerhard Richter thought of blue as "Palermo's color" (Richter, Conversation with David Reed, May 2005, Reed's notes in personal papers of David Reed, New York).

107. See *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, cat. 3.

108. For the blue triangle in pairs, see *Wvz* 71 and 110. For works related to the wall painting, see *Wvz* 526–29, 584.

109. *Palermo*, exh. brochure (1970). See also Palermo's inscription on the drawing in the Deutsche Bank collection, *Wvz* 527. Küper hypothesized that the size was 23 cm rather than 24 cm in Küper, "Palermo," 335.

110. Küper discovered that the room had six corners, none of which was a right angle; see Küper, "Palermo," 334.

111. See *Wvz* 531, 587, 594, 601. Again, the blue triangle multiple kit and the Galerie Klein blue triangle wall painting should be added here.

112. Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 17–18. Given his regular perusal of American art magazines, it is possible that Palermo knew this text, but I find it unlikely that this particular passage had anything to do with his interest in the triangle, which appears in his work as early as 1965 in *Tagtraum I*.

113. Novalis, *Fragmente*, 410. Novalis distinguishes *Witz*, which stems from the pairing of fantasy and the power of judgment, from humor, which he defines as mannerist and as stemming from the pairing of reason and arbitrariness (428).

114. Smithson implies these relationships, which the French philosopher Henri Bergson discussed in *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1911).

115. Fer, *Infinite Line*, 196. Fer's chapter on Palermo is easily the freshest, most interesting analysis of Palermo's objects to date, largely because it is grounded in precise observations made from the works themselves and refrains from generalizations.

116. For comments on the expansive white walls Palermo preferred for his objects, see in particular Meinhardt, "Blinky Palermo. Materialistische Aura," in Meinhardt, *Ende der Malerei*, 171–76. See also *Palermo. Objekte*, n.p.; Wechsler, "Bescheidene Form von Schönheit," 6; Schwenk, "Blinky Palermo," 276; *Galerien Maximilianstrasse München. Archi-*

tektur. Räume. Projekte: Jappe, "Der Bildraum als Klausur"; Glozer, "Den Raum wie Leinwand benutzen"; and Eva Schmidt, "Materialität/Visualität," 180. Some of the objects' installations away from the wall are particularly visible in *Wvz* 42–45.

117. Nolte, Interview about Palermo. Schwenk compared the gray disk to a cloud because of its sense of concentration (*Verdichtung*); see Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 14. For the three other objects, see *Wvz* 124, 125, 126.

I have been unable to determine whether Palermo had seen at least in reproduction Robert Morris's *Untitled (Cloud)* of 1962, exhibited at the Green Gallery in New York in the spring of 1963. Considering Palermo's choice of the color gray, Morris's signature color in his minimalist work of that period, and given his interest in Morris's visit to the Düsseldorf academy as claimed by Beuys, this seems a reasonable hypothesis. However, the two works do not share much beyond the secondary title, the gray color, and a general interest in presence and materiality.

118. Other examples are Palermo's two-part combination of a triangle and a T element in an untitled object of 1973 (*Wvz* 166), and a triangle-staff hybrid that was made in three similar versions (*Wvz* 67).

119. The verso notes are transcribed in the *Werkverzeichnis* (*Wvz* 50); I also consulted the original during a visit to the Menil Collection in Houston, where the work is kept. Gottschaller argues that Palermo revisited the idea of a second element in a 1967 sketch in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 34; see also *Wvz* 338. The work was listed as *Totem* in the *Palermo. Objekte* catalogue, for which, as Gottschaller notes (34n159), Palermo prepared the lists of works exhibited.

120. See Dienst, *Deutsche Kunst. Eine Neue Generation*, n.p., and the slightly different original version of the first part in *Das Kunstwerk* 21 (June–July 1968): 3; see also Klaus Hoffmann, "Neuer Expressionismus in Deutschland," *Das Kunstwerk* 18 (March 1965): 3–15; and Buchloh's definition of expressionism as a national style in Buchloh, "Einheimisch, Unheimlich, Fremd," 163. This image was confirmed in the 1980s, when major exhibitions such as *Zeitgeist* (1983), *German Art in the Twentieth Century* (1985), and *The European Iceberg* (1985) presented the essence of German art as expressionism; see *Zeitgeist*, ed. Christos Joachimides et al., exh. cat. (Berlin: Martin-Gropius Bau, 1983); Germano Celant, *The European Iceberg: Creativity in Germany and Italy Today*, exh. cat. (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), esp. 65; and *Deutsche Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert Malerei und Plastik, 1905–1985*, ed. C. M. Joachimides et al., exh. cat. (Munich: Prestel, 1986), esp. 14. See also Martin Damus's excellent discussions of the expressionist spirit in German art in Damus, *Kunst in der BRD. 1945–1990* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1995), 11ff. On the dominant role of German expressionism in the first decades after the war, see Marit Werenskiold, *The Concept of Expressionism: Origin and Metamorphoses*, trans. Ronald Walford (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984), 83–88; and Donald Gordon's essay on the origins of the term, which works out the differences between the expressionist attitude in Germany, centered around the creative subject, and the use of the term by French artists in the sense of process: "On the Origin of the Word 'Expressionism,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 368–85.

121. See *Documenta. Kunst des XX. Jahrhunderts*, exh. cat. (Munich: Prestel, 1955). On the Quadriga, see *Tachismus in Frankfurt. Quadriga 52*, essay by Ludwig Baron Döri, exh. cat. (Frankfurt: Historisches Museum, 1959). Götz's work could be used to illustrate the origins of the false or mediated gesture in postwar German art, for the staged and photographic quality of his large-scale, sweeping gestures seems to have much in common with the work of postwar German artists such as Gerhard Richter (his student), Sigmar Polke, and Blinky Palermo.

122. See *Documenta*, exh. cat. (Kassel: DuMont, 1959). On Informel, see *Thema Informel*. Teil 1: *Zur Struktur einer 'anderen' Zeit*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Haus am Waldsee, 1988); Rolf Wedewer, "Stichworte zum Informel," in *1945–1985. Kunst in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 120–31.

123. Rolf-Gunter Dienst, "Deutsche Kunst: Eine Neue Generation III," *Das Kunstwerk* 24 (November 1971): 4. Later comprehensive exhibitions of German art, such as *German Art in the 20th Century*, and more recently the *Spirit and Matter* exhibition, part of the sequence of millennial shows curated under the umbrella of *The Twentieth Century: A Century of Art in Germany*, again stress this strain as a typically German one. See *Deutsche Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert*, esp. 9; and *Das XX. Jahrhundert: Ein Jahrhundert Kunst in Deutschland*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1999). See also Klaus Honnef's excellent essay, "Kunst—'Made in Germany,'" in *1986. Vielfalt der Bilder*, exh. cat. (Bonn: Deutscher Künstlerbund, 1986), 25.

124. Werner Haftmann, *Deutsche Abstrakte Maler* (Baden-Baden: Woldemar Klein, 1953), 7–9; *Documenta. Kunst des XX. Jahrhunderts*.

125. Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1948).

126. For the full transcript of the proceedings, see *Darmstädter Gespräch. Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit*, ed. Hans Gerhard Evers (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, 1951).

127. On Zen 49, see Yule Heibel, *Reconstructing the Subject: Modernist Painting in Western Germany, 1945–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), esp. 139–40. For the Zero references, see *Zero aus Deutschland*, 152, also 42, 47, 119, 38, and 127. On Neue Abstraktion, see Klaus Jürgen-Fischer, "Neue Abstraktion," *Das Kunstwerk* 18 (April–June 1965): 4–5; Karl Ruhrberg, *Der Schlüssel zur Malerei von heute* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1965); and Juliane Roh, *Deutsche Kunst der 60er Jahre. Malerei, Collage, Op-Art, Graphik* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1971), 147–49.

128. Haftmann, *Deutsche Abstrakte Maler*, 8.

129. See Karl Ruhrberg, "Revolt and Acceptance—Düsseldorf in the Sixties," in *Aufbrüche, Manifeste, Manifestationen. Positionen in der bildenden Kunst zu Beginn der 60er Jahre in Berlin, Düsseldorf und München*, ed. Klaus Schrenk, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, and Cologne: DuMont, 1984), 88; Otto Piene in Wiehager, *Zero aus Deutschland*, 38; Horst Richter, *Malerei der sechziger Jahre* (Cologne: DuMont, 1990), 78, 84; and *Romantik? Landschaft von dazumal bis Pop*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz Museum, 1970). Romanticism continues to be regarded as a central characteristic of German art, as is seen in the large-scale exhibition *The Romantic Spirit in German Art* and the accompanying catalogue: *The Romantic Spirit in German Art, 1790–1990*, ed. Keith Hartley et al. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1994), esp. 62, 75.

130. Klaus Honnef addresses the relation between international isolation and national themes in German art in "Kunst—'Made in Germany,'" 24. For the historiography of the definition of German art, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 46ff; Hans Belting, *Die Deutschen und ihre Kunst. Ein schwieriges Erbe* (Munich: Beck, 1992).

131. Novalis, the *Blütenstaub* fragments, trans. and cited in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 49.

Chapter 2. Cloth Pictures, 1966–1972

1. My research into the exact date was surprisingly difficult and ultimately inconclusive, but my best guess is that the first cloth pictures were made in August 1966. According to Gerhard Storck, who first raised the issue from a scholarly perspective, Palermo's first wife, Ingrid Kohlhöfer, recalled that Palermo bought the fabric for the first cloth pictures during the summer sale of 1966. Storck did not believe that this could be true since Germany's regulated summer sales are held in August and he assumed that the first cloth pictures were exhibited at Palermo's first show at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich, which he thought had opened in July; see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 17.

His account, however, contains several errors and faulty assumptions. Palermo's first exhibition at Galerie Heiner Friedrich opened on 24 May, not in July, and it probably did not include cloth pictures. The exhibition list in the Palermo Archive in Millerton, N.Y., does not include any cloth pictures by name, and various compositions that were either untitled or identified by their colors do not conform to the even measurements that Palermo adopted for all the cloth pictures we have definite records for. Moreover, the one surviving photograph of the exhibition does not include any cloth pictures. Nor does Peter Bode, who wrote the only review of the exhibition, name any cloth pictures per se. He does mention Palermo's "silly gag" of "stretch[ing] canvas over wood planks, in order to then decorate them in mignonette green [*Resedagrün*] and shrill purple [*lila-grell*]"; he also describes "rhombus pictures, which are sewn from silk" ("Rückwärtsgewandte Moderne"), but neither of these descriptions matches any surviving works, neither objects nor cloth pictures. According to the exhibition list in the Palermo Archive, the earliest surviving cloth picture (fig. 45), inscribed both "Palermo 67" and "Palermo 66" on the verso, was included in Palermo's second exhibition at Galerie Friedrich in June 1967 and dated 1966 on the gallery's list. It is also recorded in a photograph of one of Palermo's *Akademierundgang* participations, but the date of this particular installation is uncertain, although it is probably February 1967. This means that Kohlhöfer may have been correct—I suspect that having one's husband buy fabric during a shopping sale was unusual enough during this period that we should not dismiss her memories lightly. I consider it unlikely that Palermo bought the fabric during the summer sale of 1965 or during the winter sale of 1966, because he would have shown the new body of work in his first one-man exhibition in May 1966.

A fashion shoot taken in front of some of Palermo's earliest cloth pictures probably took place in late 1966 or early 1967 (see fig. 46). Based on her own circumstances at the time, Thordis Moeller feels confident in her recollection that this and related photographs were taken not during a Palermo exhibition but in conjunction with the preparation or opening of an exhibition by Sigmar Polke, which took place at the Galerie Friedrich from January to February 1967; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 22 February 2006. One of Polke's black-and-white dot paintings was indeed the only work by an artist other than Palermo to serve as a backdrop for one of the fashion photographs, a black-and-white dress modeled by Six Friedrich. We know that Palermo made vertically divided cloth pictures before he did the horizontally divided ones shown in the fashion photographs, so he had probably made an earlier series before late 1966. These fashion photographs are in the Palermo Archive.

Gerhard Richter recalls that when he made his first color charts, perhaps as early as June 1966 but definitely before October 1966, when he first showed them at Friedrich +Dahlem, this "had a lot to do with Palermo and his interests" (Richter, in a 1986 interview with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting, Writings and Interviews, 1962–1993*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, trans. David Britt [Cambridge: MIT Press, and London: Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 1995], 141). This statement makes the best sense if Palermo had begun his cloth pictures before Richter embarked on the color charts; by that reckoning, Palermo's first cloth pictures date to circa August 1966 and Richter's color charts to shortly thereafter.

The literature generally agrees on the 1966 date, though some prefer 1965. See Franz Dahlem, "Das Axiometer ist der Richtungsweiser für das Steuerruder von Schiffen," in *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 129; Rinn, "Palermo," 112. Palermo signed one cloth picture "Palermo 65," but according to Storck, the signature and date were added later, at which point Palermo only remembered that the picture was an early example of the genre. In fact, in many cases the dates of the cloth pictures are not definite since Palermo often signed and dated works long after they were finished; see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 36, 9; *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*, 1:9. Henceforth illustrations will be referred to by "*Wvz*" and the illustration number; the cloth picture mentioned above is *Wvz* 54.

2. I am using "cloth picture," as opposed to "fabric picture," for *Stoffbild* because of its established usage in the English-language literature on Palermo. Moreover, whereas *fabric* connotes the raw material, *cloth* is a fabric that has been worked and has a definite quantity, as is the case with the cloth pictures.

3. Storck reports that Palermo worked on the floor and tried out compositions there. There appears to be only one instance in which Palermo worked out the composition of a cloth picture by means of a sketch. (The sketch is not included in the catalogue raisonné but it is reproduced in Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 23.) See *Wvz* 49, 55, 99, 114, 118, 121, and 142 for cloth pictures without the protective layer. Storck notes that the fabric in *Wvz* 99, 118, and 121 is very dense and did not require a protective back layer. The now-lost pink-and-orange cloth picture documented in a color photograph of Palermo's exhibition at Galerie Konrad Fischer in 1968 had no back layer either. See Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 18, 28, 32, 46; *Ausstellungen bei Konrad Fischer. Düsseldorf, Oktober 1967–Oktober 1992* (Bielefeld: Edition Marzona, 1993), 17. On the back layer, see also Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 57.

4. The exhibition *Palermo. Stoffbilder, 1966–1972*, organized by Gerhard Storck, opened on 13 November 1977, nine months after Palermo's death. According to Storck, Palermo first suggested the idea of an exhibition of cloth pictures in Krefeld before leaving for New York in the fall of 1973. Three years later he suggested mounting parallel exhibitions of new metal pictures in the Museum Haus Lange (designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe) and twenty cloth pictures in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum. See Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 7.

5. Imi Knoebel in a 1982 conversation with Johannes Stüttgen, reprinted with revisions in Martin Schulz, *Imi Knoebel. Die Tradition des gegenstandslosen Bildes* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 1998), 164. Knoebel notes that color was Palermo's "thing" and that he himself began to use colors only after Palermo's death, in the cycle *24 Farben*. Knoebel also describes setting out with Palermo to search for a specific green in paint supply stores but being unable to find the right one (161–62, 164). Knoebel mounted the exhibition dedicated to Palermo at Heiner Friedrich's Cologne gallery in October 1977; it consisted of twenty-one paintings and one sculpture.

6. The colors of the cloth pictures have frequently been treated as their titles, especially in the cases where Palermo wrote the colors on the back of a work, which underlines their importance. We do not know, however, whether

Palermo intended these as titles, and if so, whether he chose such titles for only a handful of the cloth pictures. See the entries in *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*, Band 1; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 73n49; and Wilhelm Bojescul's entry on Palermo in *Kunst der sechziger Jahre in der Neuen Galerie Kassel*, 54. Bojescul further stresses the fact that Palermo used lowercase when he wrote the color names to emphasize the colors' role as attributes.

7. Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 24.

8. *Wvz* 86 and 111.

9. See Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 21, 28, 41–42. Johannes Meinhardt also stresses the increasing colorfulness of Palermo's cloth pictures, locating a turning point in 1970; see Meinhardt, "Blinky Palermo: Materialistische Aura," in Meinhardt, *Ende der Malerei*, 174. Ludwig Rinn observes a development from splendid to cooler colors; see Rinn, "Palermo," 112.

10. Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 42.

11. References to cloth pictures included by Storck in *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo* but not included in Thordis Moeller's catalogue raisonné (*Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*) will be cited as "Storck" followed by his catalogue number. The four works mentioned above are *Wvz* 78, 85, 98, and Storck 13.

There are few inconsistencies between these two sources. The following cloth pictures are included by Storck but cannot readily be identified in the catalogue raisonné: Storck 13 (black/orange; listed as private collection, Cologne); 17 (medium blue/light blue/medium blue; listed as private collection, Düsseldorf); 57 (black[?]/white, listed as lost); 58 (white/blue, listed as lost); 59 (gray-green/brown, listed as lost); 60 (pink/yellow-brown, listed as lost); 62 (gray/gray-brown, listed as lost); 63 (light blue/medium blue, listed as lost); 64 (blue/yellow, listed as destroyed). Moeller believes that Storck 13 = *Wvz* 75, Storck 17 = *Wvz* 81, Storck 57 = *Wvz* 56, Storck 59 = *Wvz* 99, Storck 62 = *Wvz* 121; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 23 June 2008.

The following cloth pictures are included in the catalogue raisonné but do not appear in Storck's addendum: *Wvz* 80 (gold-olive/gray-blue; listed as on loan to Museum Ludwig, Cologne); 94 (black/green/blue; listed as Sammlung Dürckheim); 119 (green/dark blue; listed as Kunstammlungen zu Weimar); 140 (green/dark green; listed as Museum of Modern Art, New York); 145 (black/black; listed as Sammlung Crex, Hallen für Neue Kunst, Schaffhausen); 157 (blue/light blue; listed as Krystina and Ernst Herrmanns, Gauting).

12. The other works are *Wvz* 84 and 56 and Storck 57. See Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 25. Bernhart Schwenk also notes the serial tendencies of the cloth pictures in general; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 77, and "Farbe als Mass für das Nicht Messbare," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 13. The proportions of the two fields vary in both series of pictures, thus still asserting each individual picture as an entity, with the exception of *Wvz* 56 and 84, where the respective proportion between top and bottom field is the same. The black fields in all the pictures that combine a black element with another color have different measurements. Paired with a strong orange, for example, the black needs to be wider to assert itself and establish a balance. Another group of cloth pictures that is possibly related, if not produced as a series, consists of three small works of the same size, same proportions, and similar subdued tones (*Wvz* 115, 116, 119).

13. The work is *Wvz* 158; see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 30.

14. See ibid., 18, 20, 22. One of the major achievements of Storck's catalogue and addendum is the thorough documentation of the cloth pictures that were lost, destroyed, or unfinished or only in the planning stage. Neither Storck nor any other Palermo scholar is apparently aware of the photographs of the pop party, discussed below, which document a large number of destroyed works.

15. For example, the widow of Anton Konerding cut samples from the back of their cloth picture (*Wvz* 156) soon after it was made and put them in an envelope; a comparison with the cloth picture in the mid-nineties showed fading; Thordis Moeller, Conversation with the author, 2 August 2003. See figure 51.

16. Cloth pictures were hung alongside other works in the exhibition at Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, Cologne, in February 1970. Sabine Grosser lists a 1972 Friedrich exhibition entitled *Palermo. Neue dreiteilige Stoffbilder* in Cologne, but there are no other references to this show. She probably mistook the display of Palermo's *Triptych* at the Cologne art fair for a gallery exhibition. See Grosser, *Palermo*, 198.

17. The lost brown work may have been Storck 59 or 62, but neither of these fully fits the description given in the object list; see *Ausstellungen bei Konrad Fischer*. The other works in the exhibition were Storck 17 (made with the same materials as *Wvz* 81) and 60 and *Wvz* 78.

Kunstforum International 104 (November–December 1989): 247.

36. On the destruction of the various pictures, see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 17, 35. Pia Gottschaller clarified and corrected some misconceptions about these early fabrics, including my own. The untitled red and pink picture (fig. 45) is not made from satin, as noted in the *Werkverzeichnis*, but from a different synthetic fabric. Following her recent conservation treatment of the work, Gottschaller concluded that it was made from a plain-weave synthetic fabric rather than from an atlas weave, as she had believed initially. Gottschaller outlined her recent findings in an email to me of 13 September 2007. For her earlier theories, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 58, where she also describes the fabrics: "The difference between satin and taffeta lies in their weave structure. There are three basic types of weave structure to be distinguished: plain, twill and atlas weave. Satin falls into the atlas weave group, whereas taffeta is made from plain weave fabrics. For taffeta, either silk or synthetic yarns are used, where warp and weft yarns alternate regularly. Satin is the generic term for fabrics of strong sheen where primarily warp or weft yarns are seen on any one side" (58n325). My basic observations about the appearance and behavior of these fabrics are, in this case, not affected by these nuances.

37. See Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 57; Gottschaller pointed out the connection between the cloth picture and the early objects in her email to me of 13 September 2007.

38. "Was ist das eigentlich—ein Bild?"; G.G., "Palermo," in *Zeichen setzen durch Zeichen;* Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 31; Schuster, "Blinky Palermo," 124; "Mit Nadel und Faden"; "Krefeld: Palermo"; Jones, "Blinky Palermo, Sperone Westwater," 104. Palermo himself used the term *Futterstoff*, "lining material," in a sketch for two cloth pictures. The sketch is not included in the catalogue raisonné but is reproduced in Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 23.

39. Richard Martin, *The St. James Fashion Encyclopedia: A Survey of Style from 1945 to the Present* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1997), 87. See also Gisela Reineking von Bock, *200 Jahre Mode. Kleider vom Rokoko bis Heute*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 1991), 190–91.

40. See copies of *Der Spiegel*, e.g., which ran the Hoesch advertisement in October 1966.

41. Wechsler, "Bescheidene Form von Schönheit," 7. Hans Dickel calls the cloth pictures "succinct conformations [*prägnante Gestalten*]" in Dickel, "Kunst-Stoff von Blinky Palermo," 83; Hubertus Gassner also calls them "succinct" formal wholes in his "Imi Knoebel—Raum 19," in *Deutschlandbilder*, 292.

42. Catoir, "Palermo. Stoffbilder," 64; Meister, "Zum Gedächtnis"; "Gegenstände des Alltags"; Meister, "Krisen und Fahnenähnliches"; Jappe, "Der Bildraum als Klausur." Palermo was clearly interested in flags and initially proposed to include some form of flag in his contribution to the exhibition *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* at the Edinburgh College of Art in 1970. See below, Chapter 3, note 124. These connotations thus serve a different purpose than does the use of the flag motif by other artists at the time, not only in the work of Jasper Johns but also in the more political and activist works of Norbert Tadeusz (*Polnische Flagge* [Polish Flag], 1965), Jörg Immendorff, (*Pass Deutsche Farben* [Passport German Colors], 1965), and K. P. Brehmer, whose works reference the German national colors starting around 1970.

43. Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 63, translation slightly modified; for the German see Glozer, "Gespräch zwischen Laszlo Glozer und Joseph Beuys," 25.

44. Rorimer, "Palermo: Objects," 30; Dickel, "Kunst-Stoff von Blinky Palermo," 82; Thomas Lange, "Kern. Wand. Raum. Ort.," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 135n2.

45. Reinke, "Beispiele reiner Malerei"; see also Schwenk, "Farbe als Mass," 13.

46. Storck believed this was Palermo's solution to an unspecified "technical problem" (*Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 32). Given Palermo's experience with fabric, I believe that he could have easily figured out how to eliminate the seams dividing a field of the same color had he wished to—he would have been able to buy fabric wide enough to avoid the seams. Unfortunately, Ema Richter, who sewed some of Palermo's cloth pictures, does not recall sewing these seams; Ema Richter, Conversation with the author, 15 November 2007. Palermo's brother Michael Heisterkamp recalls watching Palermo make some of the cloth pictures and shares Storck's impression that the visible seams were not an artistic choice; Heisterkamp, Phone conversation with the author, 18 July 2007. Thordis Moeller recalls that Palermo worked with fabric remnants, which already had seams in them; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 21 July 2007.

47. "Mit Nadel und Faden." For Palermo's reliance on help with the sewing, see *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 229. Thomas

Lange discovered that Palermo later used a professional tailor in Essen-Werden; see Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 23n22. In the catalogue *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, Franz Dahlem noted that Ema Richter helped Palermo from the beginning; Dahlem, "Das Axiometer ist der Richtungsweiser für das Steuerruder von Schiffen," in *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 129. In a later essay, as well as in a later revision of the first essay, however, he identified the seamstress as "Verena"; Dahlem, "Neuland ist das Territorium der Kunst," and "Das Axiometer ist der Richtungsweiser für das Steuerruder von Schiffen," in *Blinky Palermo, 1943–1977*, 17, 23. I do not believe that the fact that Palermo relied on women to sew his pictures implies any particular sexism on his part. Palermo did not know how to sew and thus needed to have someone else do it; Ema Richter, moreover, had apprenticed as a seamstress and could thus easily sew the straight seams Palermo desired.

48. "Ema Richter" in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 109. The earliest cloth pictures were indeed not well made, judging from the folds visible in Möller's 1966 fashion photographs.

49. "Wände zu besichtigen"; Reinke, "Beispiele reiner Malerei." See also comparisons to math and industrial products in "Mit Nadel und Faden"; Jones, "Blinky Palermo, Sperone Westwater."

50. See Pfeiffer, "Karge, simple Formen"; Schuster, "Blinky Palermo," 124.

51. *Wvz* 55, 58, 59 (all 1967); *Wvz* 134 (1970).

52. Many critics have pointed out the general objectlike character and tactile qualities of the cloth pictures. See, for example, Max Wechsler, "Blinky Palermo oder die Entgrenzung in der Beschränkung," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 18; Rinn, "Palermo," 112; Dickel, "Kunst-Stoff von Blinky Palermo," 83; Krüger, "Aus farbigen Stoffen"; Pohlen, "Palermo. Die Stoffbilder im Werkzusammenhang," 11; Schuster, "Blinky Palermo," 125; and Eva Schmidt, "Materialität/Visualität; Bild/Objekt," in *Das Offene Bild. Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945*, 181.

53. Hatje and Hatje, *Design for Modern Living*, 30.

54. See *Wvz* 133, 149, 156, 157. Storck works out the development of the cloth pictures from self-contained objects to integral elements on a wall in Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 21, 28, 36, 51. See also Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 49.

55. According to Bourdieu's empirical studies, landscapes and sunsets rank highest in popularity across class and educational differences; see Pierre Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede. Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft*, trans. Bernd Schwibs and Achim Russer (1979; Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), 832; see also *Jahrbuch der öffentlichen Meinung, 1947–1955*, ed. Elisabeth Noelle and Erich Peter Neumann (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1955), 107; *Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art*, ed. Joann Wypijewski (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).

56. Schulz, *Imi Knoebel*, 148. Storck refers to the "landscape impulse" of the cloth pictures because of their one-third to two-thirds division in Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 24–25; Schwenk discusses the landscape connotations of their colors, horizontal divisions, and soft materials in Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 74, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 16, and "Blinky Palermo," 278; Hans Dickel discusses the untitled cloth picture of 1972 (fig. 51) as a work that makes visible and stands up against an alienated experience of nature in Dickel, "Kunst-Stoff von Blinky Palermo," 84. For the more specific analogies listed above, see Haase, "Bilder als Beleg einer frühen These"; Graevenitz, "Ein stiller Ketzer"; Smith, "Art: Objects and Fabric"; and Bojescul's entry on Palermo in *Kunst der sechziger Jahre*, 54.

57. For two-part examples, see *Wvz* 57, 81, 95, 96, 100, 112, 140, 141, 157; for three-part examples see *Wvz* 138, 139. Storck and Dickel both argue that in the later cloth pictures Palermo increasingly used colors that evoked nature, primarily blue and green. Given the frequent use of blue in the cloth pictures from around 1968, I do not consider this development to be as clear as they do. See Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 20; Dickel, "Kunst-Stoff von Blinky Palermo," 82. Dickel makes an interesting point when he argues that Palermo's blue in *Wvz* 156 refers to the "reification of the sky in the cliché of the postcard-blue" (Dickel, "Kunst-Stoff von Blinky Palermo," 84). The use of a clichéd color ties the cloth pictures to the idea of landscape as a popular art form.

58. Some of these drawings clearly relate as well to the painting *Komposition Blau-Rot auf Weiss* (Composition Blue Red on White) dated 1965 (*Wvz* 32), which may have been central as well to Palermo's working out of the divisions in the cloth pictures. A black field fills the bottom area of the picture, above which is a horizontal blue line and a vertical red line that divides the white field at the top in half. In *Landschaft*, 1966 (*Wvz* 38; see fig. 26), which consists of two horizontal bars, the bottom bar green with a trace of blue, the top blue, Palermo also approaches the motif of the landscape by means of the horizon line.

59. Kelly's *Red Yellow Blue White*, 1952, is the most important precedent for Palermo's cloth pictures for in this work, Kelly used pre-dyed fabric without any further paint application, something he never repeated. However, Kelly's work did not involve sewing: he stretched the different-colored fabrics on five individual square stretchers and then hung them in five columns, each consisting of five square monochrome panels. The use of primary colors and the construction distances Kelly's work from popular taste and the ready-made. In addition, Palermo could not have known *Red Yellow Blue White* at the time he began his cloth pictures: according to the object files in Kelly's studio archive in Spencertown, N.Y., it was exhibited for the first time in November 1981 in the exhibition *Amerikanische Malerei, 1930–1980* at the Haus der Kunst in Munich and reproduced for the first time (as *Twenty-five Panels: Red Yellow Blue and White*) in John Coplans's *Ellsworth Kelly* (New York: Harry M. Abrams, 1971), plate 80. Coplans described the work extensively in an excerpt of the book published in advance in *Artforum* (summer 1969): "A unique painting is *Red Yellow Blue and White* of 1952. It consists of five vertical units hung twenty-two inches apart to transcend their individual identity and create a single image of modulated colored shapes. Its overall size is five feet by twelve feet and four inches. Each vertical unit is identical in structure and subdivided into five conjoined panels one-foot square. The whole work is bilaterally symmetrical, the first and fifth and second and fourth units being made up of identical colors. The wall surfaces trapped between the panels become part of the work; thus the wall and the painting become unified in a single continuous image, the one adhering to the other. This device of separating the panels and permitting the wall to bleed through is to re-emerge more emphatically in Kelly's work in 1966. An interesting aspect of this painting is that Kelly used colored dyed cotton in place of canvas to enhance the impersonal quality of the surface" (52). My thanks to Yve-Alain Bois for the Coplans references.

Palermo did, however, greatly admire Kelly's work, and Thordis Moeller recalls a conversation with the artist in which he spoke of it in reference to the group exhibitions *Formen der Farbe* at the Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart (18 February–26 March 1967) and Documenta 4 (summer 1968), both of which included some of Kelly's 1960s work. Fred Jahn told Pia Gottschaller that Palermo was hurt when critics accused him in 1968 of plagiarizing Kelly, but I have not found any such accusations except for Georg Jappe's later review, "Der Bildraum als Klausur"; see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 59. Kelly himself referred to the connection between his and Palermo's work: "Art always grows out of other art. I don't know if, say, Imi Knoebel or Günther Förg or Blinky Palermo ever saw my early work, but I assume that they are aware of it. I think perhaps they're discovering the same thing I discovered in the '50s: It's the same kind of painting but from a completely different point of view" (Paul Taylor interview with Ellsworth Kelly, *Interview Magazine* [June 1991]: 102).

60. See *Documenta—Dokumente, 1955–1968. Vier Internationale Ausstellungen Moderner Kunst, Texte und Fotografien*, essays by Dieter Westecker et al. (Kassel: Wenderoth, 1972), 169; Laurie Monahan, "Cultural Cartography: American Designs at the 1964 Venice Biennale," in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945–1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 369–416.

61. Editors, "Wie Hoch wurden Sie bezahlt? Was ist Ihre Meinung?" *Heute Kunst* 8 (October–November 1974): 5.

62. Price quotations are from the pages devoted to the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in *KKM '71. Kölner Kunstmarkt* (Cologne, 1971), n.p. See also the average prices listed in *Kunst = Kapital. Der Capital Kunstkompass von 1970 bis heute*, ed. Linde Rohr-Bongard (Cologne: Salon-Verlag, 2001).

63. When asked by art historian Benjamin H. D. Buchloh whether he first encountered works by Barnett Newman and Willem de Kooning in the mid-fifties, when he had discovered Jackson Pollock, Richter answered, "Hardly at all. Palermo introduced me to some of the work, a bit later. Maybe at the very end of the 1960s" (Gerhard Richter in "Interview mit Benjamin H. D. Buchloh 1986," reprinted in *Gerhard Richter, Text. Schriften und Interviews*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist [Frankfurt: Insel, 1993], 125. For the English translation, see *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 134).

64. A rare early observation of this historical phenomenon was made by Karl Ruhrberg when he insisted in 1965 that the art market had grown to a shocking extent; see Ruhrberg, *Der Schlüssel zur Malerei von heute* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1965), 417. Compare also the rare analysis of the postwar art market, which posits that artists during the sixties and 1968 especially reacted against the expansion of the art market during the fifties. Raymonde Moulin, "Leben, ohne zu verkaufen," in *Kunst ist Revolution oder der Künstler in der Konsumgesellschaft* (1968; Cologne: DuMont, 1969).

65. Georg Jappe, "Young Artists in Germany," *Studio International* 183 (February 1972): 66. Perhaps the most important example of this public discussion is the series of essays run by *Die Zeit* in December 1968 and January 1969, starting with SDS-Gruppe Kultur und Revolution, "Kunst als Ware der Bewusstseinsindustrie," *Die Zeit* (29 November 1968).

66. See *20 Jahre Kunstmarkt Art Cologne*, ed. Volker Rattemeyer and Renate Petzinger et al. (Cologne: Bachem, 1986), 47–49, 52–53, 60–61.

67. See Horst Richter, "Nie zuvor wurde soviel moderne Kunst angeboten wie heute," *Weltkunst* 43, no. 19 (1973): 1544. The *Belser Kunstquartal*, a comprehensive listing of exhibitions in galleries and museums, is a valuable resource, but it began publication only in 1969. For a close look at the development of exhibitions in Germany in general between 1969 and 1977, see Brigitte Hammer, *Organisierte Kunstvermittlung und Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zur Struktur des Ausstellungswesens in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Haag + Herchen, 1983). For statistics about the development from 1970 to 1989, see Andreas Johannes Wiesand, "Kunstmarkt im Goldrausch? Daten zu Ausstellern, Händlern, Künstlern und ihrem Publikum," *Kunstforum International* 104 (November–December 1989): 78–93. For statistics on the galleries represented at the Cologne and Düsseldorf art fairs, see *20 Jahre Kunstmarkt Art Cologne*, ed. Rattemeyer and Petzinger, 167ff.

68. For the relationship of galleries to other institutions and to Documenta especially, see Jürgen Weber, *Entmündigung der Künstler. Geschichte und Funktionsweise der bürgerlichen Kunsteinrichtungen* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1987), 102; for extensive contemporary discussions concerning the role of galleries and their (contractual) relationships to artists, see "Kunst als Ware: Eine Umfrage," *Das Kunstwerk* 24 (March 1971), special issue; "Kunstmärkte 1972," *Das Kunstwerk* 25 (November 1972), special issue.

69. The relevant clause was the *Folgerecht* (resale rights) paragraph; see Friedrich Bischoff, "Folgerecht" and "Urheberrecht," in his *Kunstrecht von A–Z* (Munich: dtv and Beck, 1990), 43–44, 129–31; *1945–1985. Kunst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, essays by Dieter Honisch, Eduard Trier, et al., exh. cat. (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1985), 535, 554, 567; "Aus Theorie wird Praxis. Was bringt das Folgerecht in der Bundesrepublik?" *Magazin Kunst* 15, no. 1 (1975); and "Notizbuch der Redaktion. Bild-Kunst," *Das Kunstwerk* 23 (December 1969–January 1970).

70. See Gislind Nabakowski, "Ist der traditionelle Kunstmarkt noch von Interesse?" *Kunstnachrichten* 8 (December 1971): n.p.

71. See *20 Jahre Kunstmarkt Art Cologne*, ed. Rattemeyer and Petzinger, 8ff. For a history of antiques fairs, see Christian Herchenröder, *Die Kunstmärkte. Sammelgebiete, Museumspolitik, Auktionstrategien, Messemärkte, Die grossen Sammler, Fälschungen, Wert der Expertise*, rev. ed. (Düsseldorf: Verlag Wirtschaft und Finanzen, 1990), 260–71. The first Salon International de Galeries Pilotes took place from 20 June to 22 September 1963 at the Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts. The exhibition organizers invited seventeen galleries from nine countries to show the work of young artists they represented in order to demonstrate the leading, creative role of gallerists, as opposed to mere merchants, in discovering and promoting artists. The commercial aspect of the exhibition was extremely limited, however, unlike the Cologne art fairs, which were exclusively commercial. Sales were limited to a third of the works exhibited, and 10 percent of the profits went toward museum purchases. See *Premier Salon international de Galeries pilotes Lausanne: Artistes et découvreurs de notre temps*, exh. cat. (Lausanne: Le Musée, 1963); and Sarah Lombardi, "Historique du Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne, de 1962 à 1981," senior thesis, Université de Lausanne, 1999, esp. 35–39, in the archives of the Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne.

72. Rolf-Gunter Dienst defined productive competition as the chance to compare artists and galleries nationwide and to stimulate clients to buy by bringing them into contact with other active clients; see Dienst, "Wandel durch Handel: Anmerkungen zur Galerieszene," in *1945–1985. Kunst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 671. For a more extensive history of the first fairs, see my "Emerging Market: On the Birth of the Contemporary Art Fair," *Artforum* (April 2008): 320–29, 390, and the essays collected in the annual *Sediment:* "Kunstmarkt Köln '67. Entstehung und Entwicklung der ersten Messe für moderne Kunst, 1966–

1974," *Sediment. Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Kunsthandels* 6 (2003).

73. See "Vanity Fair. Zum dritten Mal Kölner Kunstmarkt," *Artis* 22 (December 1970): 21. Some of these numbers differ slightly from the ones listed in *20 Jahre Kunstmarkt Art Cologne*, ed. Rattemeyer and Petzinger, 100–102. For lists of participating galleries, see their respective catalogues: *Kunstmarkt 67* (Cologne, 1967); *Kunstmarkt 68* (Cologne, 1968); *Kunstmarkt Köln 1969* (Cologne, 1969); *Kölner Kunst Markt 70* (Cologne, 1970); *KKM '71; Kölner Kunstmarkt 1972* (Cologne, 1972). Foreign galleries, usually business partners of the members (including the Castelli Gallery in New York, and Iolas in Paris), were invited to the second fair, but after that no more were invited until 1971. Selected nonmember German galleries were invited each year starting in 1968 as well, for example Friedrich, Munich in 1968, and Fischer, Düsseldorf in 1969.

The first three art fairs were accompanied by exhibitions organized by VPDK members at the Cologne Kunstverein. In order to unite the sales space with these exhibitions and to gain more space in general, the art fairs were held in the Kunsthalle from 1968 on. In 1974 the fair moved to its present location, the fairgrounds and buildings across the Rhine.

74. Prospect 68 was held in the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle from 20 to 29 September, three weeks before the 1968 Cologne fair; see *20 Jahre Kunstmarkt Art Cologne*, ed. Rattemeyer and Petzinger, 26ff.

75. Important galleries that subsequently moved to Cologne included Ricke from Kassel and Reckermann from Esslingen in 1968, Maenz from Frankfurt in 1970, and Schmela from Düsseldorf in 1971. Heiner Friedrich opened a branch in Cologne in 1970 in addition to his Munich gallery. The Galeriehaus Köln housed Friedrich, Müller, Neuendorf, Onnasch, Ricke, Thelen, and Wilbrand; and published a monthly brochure entitled *Galeriehaus Köln* that discussed the gallery's monthly openings.

76. The fair catalogues stressed that members of the VPDK and participants at the fairs had to be established galleries, in existence for at least one to two years, of national or international reputation, and with an independent, original, and consistent program focusing on contemporary art. Members paid a 2,000 DM fee and also had to cover their transportation and lodging costs, a condition that eliminated many small galleries. Public coverage and reviews focused on the principle of exclusion but also on the selection criteria. Members were criticized for manipulating the market, artists, and artistic developments, and for damaging the reputation of other galleries. Alternative shows of excluded galleries accompanied the main fair from early on, most importantly the so-called Neumarkt der Künste. The definition of *contemporary* and *progressive* art was also debated, and many a reviewer complained about the large amount of established art filling the booths. Artists protested the fairs as well, speaking up against the market dominance of the exhibiting galleries, their repressive relationship to the artists, and their exclusively economic interests.

For the extensive reception of the Cologne art fairs, see, most importantly, "Kunstmärkte 1972"; Georg Jappe, "Der Progress tanzt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (15 September 1967); Hans Alexander Baier, "Nur 18 Progressive Galerien?" *Das Kunstwerk* 20 (February–March 1967): 57; Joseph Beuys, Erwin Heerich, and Klaus Staeck, "Informationen. Aufruf," *Interfunktionen* 7 (1971): 90; Ed Sommer, "Cologne Letter," *Art International* 12 (20 January 1968); Ernst Günther Engelhard, "Beste, neueste, billigste Bilder. Deutschlands Märkte für zeitgenössische Kunst und ihr Publikum," *Kunstjahrbuch* 1 (1970): 119–22; and Willi Bongard, "Kein Jubiläum zum Jubeln. Zehn Jahre Kunstmessen und -märkte," *Du* 433 (March 1977): 8–10. See also *20 Jahre Kunstmarkt Art Cologne*, ed. Rattemeyer and Petzinger; Brigitte Jacobs, "Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Kunstelite und Populärkultur. Der Kölner Kunstmarkt und seine Gegen- und Konkurrenzveranstaltungen in der Medienkritik," in "Kunstmarkt Köln '67. Entstehung und Entwicklung," 25–37.

77. For the history of the Gürzenich building, see Angela Pfotenhauer, *Köln. Der Gürzenich und Alt St. Alban* (Cologne: Bachem, 1993), 25–30, 48.

78. Horst Richter, "Die Kunstmärkte von Köln," *Kunstjahrbuch* 1 (1970): 116; Wolfgang Becker, "Kunst als Geschäft. Über Prospekt 69 und Kunstmarkt," *Kunst und Unterricht* 6 (December 1969): 46. See also Lothar Romain's articles "Kunst und Geld," *Das Kunstwerk* 23 (December 1969–January 1970): 50, and "Zur Situation der Kunstmärkte," *Das Kunstwerk* 25 (November 1972): 3–7. Among the many voices responding to the increasing prominence of the art fairs, Romain presents by far the most complex and succinct analysis of the phenomenon, arguing among other things that the art fair made visible the reification of the art object.

79. See Anna Klapheck, *Vom Notbehelf zur Wohlstands-*

kunst. Kunst im Rheinland der Nachkriegszeit (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 159; Engelhard, "Beste, neueste, billigste Bilder," 120. See also the various photographs published in reviews of the art fairs as well as in Georg Blochmann, "Köln leuchtet—Streiflichter aus der Geschichte eines Kunsthandelsplatzes. Von der Gründung des Kunstvereins bis zur Art Cologne," in *Kunst Markt Köln. Wirtschaftsfaktor Kunst* (Cologne: Die Stadt, 1986); Hans-Jürgen Müller, *Kunst kommt nicht von Können. Über die Schwierigkeiten beim Umgang mit zeitgenössischer Kunst. Ein Streifzug durch die sechziger Jahre* (Nuremberg: Belser, 1976); *20 Jahre Kunstmarkt Art Cologne*, ed. Rattemeyer and Petzinger; and "Kunstmarkt Köln '67. Entstehung und Entwicklung."

80. Rolf-Gunter Dienst, "Interview with Hein Stünke," *Das Kunstwerk* 25 (November 1972): 9.

81. For reports about department-store art exhibitions and sales, see K. Hakiewitz, "Farbexplosion über der Couch und Chiffren an der Bar. Ein Münchener Experiment. Moderne Kunst im Kaufhaus," *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* (19 February 1964); "Kunsthandel," *Der Spiegel* (24 October 1966): 157; "Kunst für Konsumenten," *Artis* 20 (October 1968): 39; first entry under "Wettbewerbe," *Kunstwerk* 23 (April–May 1970): 91; and Elsbeth Haller, "Kunst im Kaufhaus," *Kunstwerk* 25 (January 1972): 73.

82. See *Die 60er Jahre. Kölns Weg zur Kunstmetropole Vom Happening zum Kunstmarkt*, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath and Gabriele Lueg, exh. cat. (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1986), 436–41.

83. See "Kunsthandel," 157; Christian Herchenröder, *Die Neuen Kunstmärkte. Analyse, Bilanz, Ausblick* (Düsseldorf: Verlag Wirtschaft und Finanzen, 1990), 20.

84. E.B., "Kunstmarkt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (6 November 1970). Bongard had apparently published related lists previously in *Hamburger Wochenblatt*. See "Aus Alt mach' Geld," *Artis* 22 (September 1970): 45. On *Kunstkompass*, see *Kunst + Kapital*.

85. The importance of collections, exhibitions, and literature was determined by questionnaires sent to curators and directors. For a detailed explanation of the lists, calculations, and criteria, see Willi Bongard, *Wer sind die grössten? oder, Ist Kunst messbar?* (Cologne: Art Aktuell, 1972), and "Zu Fragen des Geschmacks in der Rezeption bildender Kunst der Gegenwart," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 17 (1974): 254ff.

86. For early discussions of this phenomenon, see Wolfgang Wunderlich, "Die Kunst für die Kunst oder. Gefährliche Flucht in die Sachwerte," *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim* 87 (February 1975): 74; "Kunst und Bankgeschäft," *Magazin Kunst* 3 (1974): 36. Daimler Benz started its corporate collection in 1978, the Deutsche Bank in 1980. For a later analysis of art as investment, see Bruno Frey and Werner Pomerehne, *Muses and Markets: Explorations in the Economics of the Arts* (Oxford: Blackwell 1989), 101–18.

87. Willi Bongard, *Kunst und Kommerz. Zwischen Passion und Spekulation* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1967); Horst Wagenführ, *Kunst als Kapitalanlage* (Stuttgart: Forkel, 1967); Robert Wraight, *Das Geschäft mit der Kunst* (Munich: 1967).

88. This is particularly prominent in "Kunstmärkte 1972," the special issue of *Das Kunstwerk*.

89. See Daniel Spoerri, Letter to Josef Albers, quoted in Katerina Vatsella, "Produkt. Kunst! Die Edition MAT," in *Produkt. Kunst! Wo bleibt das Original?* exh. cat. (Bremen: Neues Museum Weserburg, 1997), 13. See many other concurrent references defining multiples in similar terms, especially *Ars Multiplicata. Vervielfältigte Kunst seit 1945*, essays by Gert von der Osten, Willi Bongard, et al., exh. cat. (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz Museum, 1968), 15ff., 38; Hanno Reuther, "Schwerer Abschied von Gestern. Über vorläufige Unmöglichkeiten industrieller Kunstfabrikation," *Kunst und Unterricht* 10 (December 1970): 98; and *Multiples. Ein Versuch, die Entwicklung des Auflagenobjektes herzustellen*, essays by René Block et al., exh. cat. (Berlin: Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, 1974), 13, 90. The American dealer Marian Goodman founded her New York–based gallery Multiples in 1965.

90. See *Ars Multiplicata*, 13ff., 38; "Ars Multiplicata. Antworten auf eine Umfrage," *Kunst* 31 (1968): 818; Hans Alexander Baier, "Ars Multiplicata," *Kunst* 29 (January–March 1968): 631; and *International Index of Multiples from Duchamp to the Present*, ed. Daniel Buchholz and Gregorio Magnani (Cologne: König, 1993), 10.

91. Other early examples of programmatic multiple production are Jean Fautrier's 1950 *originaux multiples* and Piero Manzoni's multiples. On Duchamp's ready-made editions, see Francis Naumann, "Proliferation of the Already Made: Copies, Replicas, and Works in Edition, 1960–1964," in Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York: Abrams, 1999).

92. On *MAT*, see Vatsella, "Produkt. Kunst!" and Vatsella's interviews with Daniel Spoerri and Karl Gerstner in *Produkt. Kunst!* 10–43, 44–56.

93. Beuys, with Bernd Klüser and Jörg Schellmann in *Multiples*, 90.

94. See René Block, "Bemerkungen zu Anliegen, Aufbau und Auswahl der Ausstellung," in *Multiples*, 22–24.

95. For exhibition catalogues, see *Ars Multiplicata* and *Multiples*. Other exhibitions took place outside of Germany, including the London Arts Council's *Three to Infinity: New Multiple Art* at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1970 and the 1971 *Multiples: The First Decade* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

96. See Stefan Germer, "Das Jahrhundertding," in *Das Jahrhundert des Multiple. Von Duchamp bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Zdenek Felix, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Oktagon, 1995), 68.

97. For price changes, see Siegfried Neuenhausen, "Was ist multiple Kunst?" *Kunst und Unterricht* 3 (March 1969): 41; Reuther, "Schwerer Abschied von Gestern," 47. For contemporary prices of multiples see *Three to Infinity: New Multiple Art*, exh. cat. (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1970).

98. Neuenhausen, "Was ist multiple Kunst?" 47. For sizes of editions, see *Three to Infinity;* Buchholz and Magnani, *International Index of Multiples*.

99. Block, "Bemerkungen zu Anliegen," 21. Block's detailed discussion of his production of Richard Hamilton's multiple *The Critic Laughs* is particularly instructive in this respect.

100. Klaus Jürgen-Fischer, "Kunst von der Stange," *Kunstwerk* 21 (October–November 1967): 23–24.

101. The blue triangle multiple kit is considered part of Palermo's print oeuvre and is hence included in the catalogue raisonné of prints. See *Palermo. Die Gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, 18–19. However, Palermo probably considered the "results" of the use of the multiple—the blue triangles painted over doors in various locations—as examples of his wall paintings. See Chapter 3, note 98, below.

102. These instructions were exhibited by Palermo along with a photograph of the triangle being painted in a group show of prints in London's Whitechapel Gallery. For the reproduction see *Three to Infinity*. It appears that the Galerie René Block, which produced the *Blaues Dreieck*, also sold the stencil separate from the kit. See the advertisement in the directory of art editions in *Magazin Kunst* 10 (February–April 1970): 1601.

103. Jasper Johns's multiple *Target* (1970) is similar in conception to Palermo's blue triangle multiple. The multiple was commissioned for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition catalogue *Technics and Creativity II* published in 1971. A white plastic box contained the catalogue and a lithograph of a target, along with small pots of red, yellow, and blue watercolor and a small brush. The owner was to fill in the colors and then co-sign the work; Johns left a space next to his signature. See *Technics and Creativity II*, essay by Riva Castleman, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971).

104. Gerhard Storck, "Stadt—als Schule—als Kunstwerk: Düsseldorf," in *Konstcen Düsseldorf*, 23. On the occasion of his 1977 exhibition, Storck remembered that the cloth pictures were not worth much in 1970; see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 13. Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 61. Schwenk reports that the cloth pictures sold well; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 30.

105. For entries of cloth pictures in art fair catalogues, see the advertisement of the Wide White Space Gallery in *Prospect 68*, 14, and the advertisement of Galerie Heiner Friedrich in *Kunstmarkt Köln 1969*. Galerie Friedrich had invited several of its artists—Palermo, Georg Baselitz, Imi Knoebel, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, and Franz Erhard Walther—to create one-day installations for its booth space at the 1972 Cologne art fair. Palermo exhibited *Triptychon* along with a few drawings; Thordis Moeller, Conversation with the author, 21 July 2007.

106. The various accounts in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* clearly give the impression that Palermo regarded Friedrich as a friend, as do numerous photographs in the Palermo Archive—for example, a photograph of Friedrich and Palermo watching soccer on television together. For Richter's comment, see page 75. Palermo's one-time studio mate Ulrich Rückriem does add that Palermo was under tremendous pressure to produce because of his contract with Friedrich (81). A letter to Palermo from the Galerie Friedrich dated 9 December 1970 formalized the contractual details for representation of his work, commissions, and pay. For direct executions like the wall paintings, Palermo and the gallery were to split the honorarium equally (Galerie Friedrich, Letter to Palermo, 9 December 1970, Palermo Files, Bestand Six Friedrich, A47, V, 1, 191). See also Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 21. Babett Scobel, Palermo's last girlfriend, recalls that Palermo received 2,000 DM from Friedrich in 1976 during the time they were together; in return Palermo had to turn over all work to him; see "Babett Scobel," in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 44; Grosser, *Palermo*, 58–59. Herbert Nolte remembered that the financial security provided by

Friedrich was extremely important to Palermo in Nolte, Interview about Palermo. For the signatories of the pamphlet, see *20 Jahre Kunstmarkt Art Cologne*, ed. Rattemeyer and Petzinger, 61.

107. See Schmid, "Erst rot, dann tot." Undoubtedly, prices generally picked up with the market boom of the 1980s. See the price comparisons in Grosser, *Palermo*, 71–72. Georg Jappe notes the popularity of Palermo's drawings on the market in Jappe, "Der Bildraum als Klausur." For the art fair magazine piece, see Cladders, "Über Palermo," 6–7.

108. For discussions of such slippages in modernist discourse and practices, see most importantly Yve-Alain Bois, "Greenberg's Amendments," *Kunst en Museumsjournaal* 5 (1993): 1–9, and "Ryman's Tact," in Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 215–27; and my own "Siskind's Challenge: Action Painting and a Newer Laocoon, Photographically Speaking," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (2006): 86–107.

109. Rückriem, cited in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 57.

110. Palermo traveled to Amsterdam and Paris in 1964. Katharina Schmidt noted in an essay on Imi Knoebel that the Maleviches at the Stedelijk Museum were "a signal experience for him and Palermo" (Schmidt, "The Greifweg Studio," in *Imi Knoebel*, essays by Franz Dahlem, Katharina Schmidt, and Kubinski/Dubost, exh. cat. [New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1987], 12). The often-remarked similarity between Malevich's 1915 *Suprematism (with Red Rectangles)*, in the Stedelijk's collection since 1958, and Palermo's 1964 *Komposition mit 8 roten Rechtecken* suggests that he did see the Malevich work at some point, in original or reproduction. Palermo's 1965 *Straight* also assumed familiarity with Mondrian's late transatlantic paintings made with tape, especially *New York City*. See "Biographie," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 229.

Schwenk claimed further that Palermo participated in Documenta 4; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 30. While this is not true, Palermo did follow Documenta 4 closely and visited it in 1968, as confirmed by Thordis Moeller in various conversations, and perhaps he also visited Documenta 3 in 1964. Documenta 3 still displayed a great deal of prewar art, while Documenta 4 included the most recent developments in the United States, above all, color-field painting and minimalist sculpture. Other exhibitions in and around Germany would have provided Palermo with the opportunity to see color-field painting, for example, the 1965 *Signale* exhibition in Basel (1966 in Eindhoven), the *Formen der Farbe* exhibition in Stuttgart in 1967 (which Thordis Moeller reports he spoke to her about), or the 1965 Morris Louis exhibition in Baden-Baden.

German museums aggressively acquired paintings by Louis, Stella, Noland, and others from the mid-sixties on. See the acquisitions in "A III Liste der in der Erhebung erfassten Werke," in *Amerikanische Kunst von 1945 bis heute. Kunst der USA in europäischen Sammlungen*, ed. Dieter Honisch and Jens Christian Jensen, exh. cat. (Cologne: DuMont, 1976), 166ff.

111. The photograph is reproduced in color in *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, ill. 118. The Düsseldorf academy began subscribing to *Art International* in May 1963 and to *Artforum* and *Art in America* in 1967. *Das Kunstwerk* regularly covered the New York scene, most prominently in its special issue "Kunst in New York," *Das Kunstwerk* 12 (April–June 1966). For a collection of Fried's writings, see Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), esp. 279ff.

The discourse of essentialism was less prominent and less sophisticated in Germany than in the United States, although Jean Leering develops ideas based on Barbara Rose's and Clement Greenberg's writings in the catalogue for Documenta 4; Jean Leering, "Post-Painterly Abstraktion," in *4. documenta*, essays by Max Imdahl et al., exh. cat. (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum, 1968), 1:xix, xvii. Eduard Trier, in his beginning of the semester speech to students at the Düsseldorf academy, argued that concern with the correspondence of a technique with material and form was perhaps no longer valuable in contemporary art; see Trier, "Kriterien für Kunstkritik," *Magazin Kunst* 19–21 (1966): 363.

Palermo is quoted from a transcription of his comments in Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Video Documentation.

112. See Max Wechsler, "Blinky Palermo oder die Entgrenzung in der Beschränkung," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 18; *Handbuch Museum Ludwig. Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 596; and Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 117.

113. Meister, "Zum Gedächtnis"; Reinke, "Beispiele reiner Malerei"; Laura Arici's comment in Curiger, "Ein weiterer Blick," 71.

114. Meister, "Spiel aus Farbe und Licht."

115. Polke, Conversation with Gottschaller, in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 58.

116. Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 76, 130–31. On the theme of wholeness and division in Palermo and Knoebel, see also Hubertus Gassner, “Imi Knoebel—Raum 19,” in *Deutschlandbilder*, 292.

117. Storck argued that the more extremely “bunt” cloth pictures are sometimes tied together by a slightly vertical format in Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 26.

118. Storck believes that this crisis is confirmed by the fact that Palermo was in poor health and reportedly did not like to talk much about the cloth pictures at that time; see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 7, 26–28. Examples are *Wvz* 99, 117, 118, 120, 121.

119. Examples are *Wvz* 59, 80, 135, 145.

120. Clement Greenberg, “After Abstract Expressionism” (1962), in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O’Brian, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4:131–32. See also Michael Fried’s discussion of this problem in his “Art and Objecthood” (1967) and “Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella” (1965), in Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 152, 168–69n6, 258–59. See also Wassily Kandinsky’s praise of the “pure canvas that is itself as beautiful as a picture,” in Kandinsky, “Reminiscences/Three Pictures” (1913), in *Wassily Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (1982; New York: DaCapo, 1994), 372.

121. Greenberg was mistaken when he claimed that Barnett Newman stained his canvases; Newman did, however, make use of raw, exposed canvas in *The Stations of the Cross* (1958–66); see Clement Greenberg, “Louis and Noland” (1960), “Introduction to an Exhibition of Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Jules Olitski” (1963), and “‘American-Type’ Painting” (1955), in *Greenberg: Collected Essays and Criticism*, 4:96ff., 4:151–52, 3:232. References to this aspect of the cloth pictures are frequent in the Palermo literature; see Rorimer, “Palermo: Objects,” 30; Bojescul, *Kunst der sechziger Jahre*, 54; Sauerbier, “Die neue Malerei und ihre Kritik,” 121; Erich Franz, “Gesehen II. Ohne Titel (Stoffbild rot, blau), 1968,” in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 125; and Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 129. Ronald Jones argues that Palermo mocks the seriousness of the color without depth problem by presenting the most obvious solution in Jones, “Blinky Palermo, Sperone Westwater.”

122. Fried, “Three American Painters,” 217; Greenberg, “Louis and Noland,” 97.

123. See, for example, Meister, “Spiel aus Farbe und Licht”; Rinn, “Palermo,” 112; and Schwenk, “Studien zur Person,” 117–18.

124. See Bois, “Ryman’s Tact”; Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 21–22.

125. Schwenk and Bojescul understand the dyeing process as painting; see Schwenk, “Studien zur Person,” 75; Bojescul, *Kunst der sechziger Jahre*, 54. Isolating the pigment or paint and dissociating it from its support is the other side of this coin, as seen, for example, in the monochromes of Yves Klein, the pigment use of Anish Kapoor, or the acrylic paint displays of Linda Besemer.

126. Fried, “Three American Painters,” 217.

127. Some writers have pointed to related dualisms at the heart of the cloth pictures. In his review of Storck’s cloth picture exhibition, Klaus Reinke wrote that “without any problems, one could imagine a computer that produced a complete set of all possible combinations, piece by piece. That is the flip side of ‘the essence of painting’” (Reinke, “Beispiele reiner Malerei”). Ronald Jones in his brief but excellent review of a Palermo exhibition at Sperone Westwater Gallery wrote that Palermo’s cloth pictures embody the dogma of modernist painting but contradict it as well. As I shall discuss, I disagree with Jones’s insistence on the ironic dimension of the cloth pictures; see Jones, “Blinky Palermo, Sperone Westwater.” Robert Storr phrases the dualism in terms of the “sublime” and the “ready-made sublime” in Storr, “Beuys’s Boys,” 167; Max Brüderlin in terms of a combination of Ad Reinhardt and an everyday experience, in Brüderlin, “Das geflügelte Bild oder Malerei als Wiederholung,” 114; Bernhard Bürgi in terms of the everyday and the visual, in Bürgi, “Palermo Werke 1963–1977” (1984), reprinted in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 197; and Jürgen Morschel in terms of landscape and pure color, in Morschel, “Blinky Palermo,” 9.

128. See Thierry de Duve, “The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas,” in Guilbaut, *Reconstructing Modernism*, 244–310.

129. Furthermore, I would insist, in answer to de Duve, that the actualization of the blank canvas in Palermo’s cloth pictures—at a specific moment and in more complex ways “ready-made” than a merely blank canvas (for example, through its standard measurements, its associations with landscape, etc.)—could only have happened within the specific historical context laid out in this chapter.

130. In his exhibition catalogue *Systemic Painting*, Lawrence Alloway points out parallels between what he once called hard-edge painting and pop art. His examples include Stella’s and Jasper Johns’s explorations in their paintings into the question of what constitutes art, the lack of formal diversity in Lichtenstein and Warhol, and, most important, the use of "color in such a way that it retains a residue of environmental echoes; commercial and industrial paint can be used in this way." Elaborating on a quotation by Al Brunelle, he continues, "The reference to eyeliner, combined with the 'cobra skin' finish, the crystals, and the pink plastic surfaces, raises an association of pop culture that is hard to shake" (Alloway, "Introduction," in *Systemic Painting*, essay by Lawrence Alloway, exh. cat. [New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1966], 19–20).

131. Jones aligns Stella's paintings with those of Andy Warhol and Robert Smithson, tracing what she calls the "technological sublime" in their work as a reaction against the abstract expressionists' subjective conception of painting; see Caroline A. Jones, "Frank Stella, Executive Artist," in Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 114–88. Martin Damus insists in more general terms that a pop quality can exist in the absence of an object or a representation; see Damus, *Kunst in der BRD*, 83.

132. Fried, "Three American Painters," 246.

133. Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments" (1966), in *The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 16. Smithson goes on to discuss the colors of John Chamberlain and Donald Judd, recounting Chamberlain's recommendation to Judd to buy "Hi-Fi" color at the Harley Davidson Motorcycle Company. Judd did so in order to make his surfaces look hard, using "Saturnian orchid-plus to wrinkle-textured blues and greens—alchemy from the year 2000" (17).

134. Again, it was Alloway who pointed to this problem in his 1966 essay, writing that "the pressing problem of art criticism now is to re-establish abstract art's connections with other experience without, of course, abandoning the now general sense of art's autonomy" (Alloway, "Introduction," *Systemic Painting*, 20).

135. Donald Judd specifically remarks on the wholeness and solidity of John Chamberlain's work and that of Claes Oldenburg; see *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, 1959–1975*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975), 108–9, 133, 191–92. In his book on pop art, the German critic Heinz Ohff points out that many of the new realists studied under abstract artists and insists that the two are not that different from each other; see Ohff, *Pop und die Folgen, oder, Die Kunst, Kunst auf der Strasse zu finden* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1968), 60. Equally, Rolf-Gunter Dienst argues that the question whether a work is figurative or abstract is secondary to the question of how meaning can be conveyed by means of painting; see Dienst, *Pop-Art. Eine kritische Information* (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1965), 70.

136. There is one surprising exception to this avoidance of polarization in a Greenberg essay from the late sixties. Greenberg disapprovingly notes the "unity" and "uniformity" in contemporary art and includes pop, minimal art, hard edge, color field, and shaped canvas: "Some markedly common features emerge. Design of layout is almost always clear and explicit, drawing sharp and clean, shape or area geometrically simplified or at least faired and trued, color flat and bright or at least undifferentiated in value and texture within a given hue" (Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties" [1969], reprinted *Greenberg, Collected Essays and Criticism*, 4:294). James Meyer brings minimalism and pop art back into dialogue with one another in Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

137. Rolf Lauter is the only writer who explicitly discusses the coexistence of pop and color-field elements in the cloth pictures, referring to the cloth pictures' "residual connection to Pop Art, and at the same time, [their] intensive relationship to American Colour Painting" (Lauter, "Blinky Palermo," 112). Robert Storr argues that one perceives these references in succession: they have a color-field look from a distance and make a dada gesture from up close; see Storr, "Beuys's Boys," 167. Bernhard Bürgi suggests that the cloth pictures' references to everyday life and visual reality stand in contrast to concurrent American painting; see Bürgi, "Palermo Werke 1963–1977," 197.

138. The term was used again for the exhibition *Farbobjekte + Signale* at the Haus am Waldsee, Berlin, held in 1965, the same year as the Basel exhibition. On signal art see, for example, Jürgen Claus, review of signal exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel, *Das Kunstwerk* 19 (August 1965): 25–26; Dienst, *Pop-Art. Eine kritische Information*, 74–77, 91–93; Will Grohmann, "Berlin. Farbobjekte und Signale," *Art International* 10 (20 April 1966): 57–58; Hans Heinz Holz, "Unfug eines Begriffs," *Das Kunstwerk* 21 (December 1967–January 1968): 82–83; Heinz Ohff, *Galerie der Neuen Kunst. Revolution ohne Programm* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1971), 122; and Dienst, *Deutsche Kunst. Eine Neue Generation*, 20–21, 31ff.

139. Heinz Ohff, “Düsseldorf Heute oder Düsseldorf International,” in *Düsseldorf. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Gäste der Landeshauptstadt* 3 (1968): 23; Manfred de la Motte, “Junge Deutsche Maler nach Pop,” *Art International* 10 (20 February 1966): 21; Rolf-Gunter Dienst, *Positionen* (Cologne: DuMont, 1968), 35. See also Dienst, *Pop-Art. Eine kritische Information*, 75.

140. Fried, “New York Letter: Louis, Chamberlain and Stella, Indiana” (25 November 1962), reprinted in Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 285.

141. The quotation, “den Haupteingang . . . plakativ umfunktionieren durch Signale,” is from “Umriss der Planung für Düsseldorfer-Ausstellung in Edinburgh, Gespräch Dr. Jappe, Günther Uecker, Ruhrberg am Freitag den 15. 5. 1970, vorausgegangen: Gespräch Jappe mit Uecker, Filliou, Graubner, Kolhöfer [*sic*], Luther, Palermo, Polke, Richter,” exhibition files in the Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf, IV 32966 Edinburgh 1970. “Liste der Arbeiten für Edinburgh 26.6.70,” in the same file, includes the following note: “In addition: Brüning and Alvermann, following four artists (Ruthenbeck, Richter, Polke, Palermo) who spoke on their behalf and otherwise threatened to pull out. . . . The above named also declared, it would have been better to include the classic avant-garde and made a condition for the exhibition’s possible traveling to London. Their guys: Geiger, Kricke, Hoehme, Gaul, Götz, Goller, Haese, perhaps Hollein.” Moeller confirmed Palermo’s interest in these painters and reported that Palermo owned a painting by Brüning; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 14 March 2006.

142. K. O. Götz, *Erinnerungen und Werk*, Band 1b (Düsseldorf: Concept Verlag, 1983), 91–92. Richter himself has talked about lacquer pictures that he did before his first photo-based paintings that were influenced by Winfred Gaul; see Richter, “Notizen 1964,” in *Richter, Text*, 18.

143. Gerhard Storck writes that both Palermo’s wife at the time, Ingrid Kohlhöfer, and Gerhard Richter told him that a pop attitude inspired by his friendship with Richter and Polke caused Palermo to make the first cloth pictures; see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 17. Bernhart Schwenk argues the same in Schwenk, “Studien zur Person,” 77–78. Franz Dahlem suggests the influence of Polke’s use of cloth as well in his “Neuland ist das Territorium der Kunst,” in *Blinky Palermo, 1943–1977*, 15. Palermo’s untitled patterned cloth picture of 1967 (*Wvz* 62) discussed above comes closest to Polke’s way of using cloth in a predominantly pop art manner. Its lack of purist qualities probably constitutes another reason why Palermo did not pursue this use of patterned cloth. On Kelly’s painting, see note 59, above.

144. Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007. Polke, Conversation with Gottschaller, in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 58.

145. Richter in an interview with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, in *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 141, translation slightly modified. On the dating of the cloth pictures, see note 1, above.

146. Ibid., translation slightly modified. Gerhard Storck also distinguishes between Richter’s pop-oriented color chart paintings and Palermo’s more serious concerns in Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 17. For the position of the color charts in the chronology of Richter’s oeuvre, see *Gerhard Richter*, Band 3: *Werkübersicht*, 1962–1993, essays by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Peter Gidal, and Birgit Pelzer, exh. cat. (Bonn: Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1993), ills. 135-1 through 144-10, 300-1 through 301-20.

147. The motif is difficult to identify. Richter later revealed that the painting was based on Polaroid photographs he had taken of a lightbulb. See Chapter 5, below, and “Gerhard Richter,” in Marcovicz, *“To the People . . . ,”* 77.

148. Palermo and Richter’s subsequent collaborative print *Telefon* (also 1971) establishes this balance in a different way (see fig. 158). The print consists of two small adjacent images based on photographs. These two pop images are placed against an unusually expansive pristine yellow ground.

149. See Lauter, “Blinky Palermo,” 185; Schwenk, *Gleichnisse des Unerklärlichen*, 18; and Schwenk, “Studien zur Person,” 78–79. The fabric used for *Leisesprecher I* was probably the same as the one used for *Tuchverspannung*, discussed in Chapter 3. See Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 64.

Chapter 3. Wall Paintings, 1968–1973

1. For the estimation of Palermo’s friends—Imi Knoebel, Katharina Sieverding, Johannes Stüttgen, and Walter Dahn—see their 1992 declaration in an effort to preserve one of the wall paintings, reproduced in Küper, “Palermo,” 529. (Küper’s dissertation on Palermo’s wall drawings, using numerous interviews and extensive archival research to create detailed descriptions of all planned and executed wall paintings—with the exception of Palermo and Gerhard Richter’s proposals for the 1972 Olympics—provides excellent historical documentation that far exceeds Palermo’s own often incomplete and unclear documentation.) For "intensive experience of space" see Rinn, "Palermo," 116. For a summary of frequent dismissals of Palermo as a mere wall painter, see Grosser, *Palermo*, 82–83.

2. Mel Bochner, Conversation with the author, October 2005.

3. See Palermo's inscriptions in the documentation in *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*, Band 2, ills. 580 a–d. Henceforth illustrations will be referred to by "*Wvz*" and the illustration number.

4. "Franz Dahlem," in Markovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 120–21. For a drawing of the swastika, see *Wvz* 571. This sequence of idea and execution differs from that given by Dahlem in Küper, "Palermo," 260n2. Gottschaller reports that Dahlem often clashed with Palermo; see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 21.

5. The artist's proof for the poster is in Palermo's catalogue raisonné of prints; see *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, 16–17. Palermo included a drawing representing the same layout of numbers in his wall painting documentation.

6. On LeWitt, see Rosalind Krauss, "LeWitt in Progress," in Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 244–59; Yve-Alain Bois, "François Morellet/Sol Le Witt: A Case Study," in *Artistic Exchange: Acts of the 28th International Congress of Art History, Berlin, July 15–20* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993). Palermo's technique, as illuminated by Pia Gottschaller, marks another difference from LeWitt. Although Palermo drew the initial outline of each configuration with a water scale and pencil, he drew the final oil stick lines freehand; see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 63. Susan Tallman also points out that the initial impression that there is a system is incorrect; obvious choices were eliminated, and the system gives way to taste, intuition, and forgetfulness; see Tallman, "Blinky Palermo," 16.

7. Baker, "Blinky Palermo at Heiner Friedrich," 116.

8. See the ground plan of the exhibition layout in *Documenta 5. Befragung der Realität, Bildwelten heute*, 42.

9. Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), vii; *Reconsidering the Object of Art*, 13.

10. See *Wvz* 519.

11. Thordis Moeller, Conversations with the author, 2 August 2003 and 21 July 2007. Moeller recalls that Palermo liked the way she had documented the first wall drawings and adapted her system for his own documentation.

12. See the exhibition history in *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*, Band 1, and a reference in the folder on Blinky Palermo, Archiv der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. See also Susanne Küper, "Wandzeichnungen und Wandmalereien 1968–1973," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 142n4; Küper, "Palermo," 257, especially notes 9 and 10.

13. For the complete documentation, see *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*, Band 2. Palermo's documentation is not completely consistent. It contains one unexecuted drawing (Gymnasium Mönchengladbach) and two collaborations (with Gerhard Richter for Six Friedrich's apartment and with Imi Knoebel for the Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden), yet it does not include other unexecuted wall works (the Olympic buildings proposal with Gerhard Richter), or several of the executed wall paintings (Düsseldorfer Szene Kunstmuseum Luzern, Galerie Konrad Fischer) or one important collaborative project (Galerie Heiner Friedrich with Richter). Given these gaps, Palermo's selection process must ultimately remain unclear. However, the omissions were probably not conceptually motivated but rather the result of missing, or at the time unavailable, documentary material. Dierk Stemmler notes in his 1981 documentation of the wall paintings that "according to Heiner Hepper, galerie art in progress, Düsseldorf, Palermo planned . . . a documentation of his wall-painting/staircase at Galerie Konrad Fischer of 1970. Since the artist himself, at a time when he did not want to realize any more wall paintings or drawings, did not own any more material about the Konrad Fischer staircase," it remained undocumented; see Stemmler, "Verzeichnis II. Wandmalereien und -zeichnungen, Entwürfe/Dokumentation," in *Palermo (Peter Heisterkamp)*, 144. Two documentations for the work (one of them probably *Wvz* 553) are visible in the 1971 *Palermo Projekte 68/70* exhibition (see fig. 72).

14. Bernhard Bürgi compared Palermo to Sol LeWitt and Niele Toroni. Like these conceptual artists, he appropriated architectonic space as his "field of action" and transformed a "spatial situation" into a "visual space"; see Bürgi, "Palermo Werke 1963–1977," in *Blinky Palermo, 1943–1977*, 197. For a discussion of the ways in which conceptual art centered on rethinking photographic documentation, see Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 218–19. Matta-Clark's no longer extant building cuts pose a problem for the art historian similar to Palermo's wall paintings. However, whereas Matta-Clark problematized the role of photographic documentation of his works, as Lee argues convincingly, such a claim cannot be made for Palermo's documentation and would be overstating its art historical importance.

15. See Sol LeWitt, "Wall Drawings" (1970) and "Doing Wall Drawings" (1971), in *Sol LeWitt: Critical Texts*, ed. Adachiara Zevi (Rome: AEIUO, 1994), 91–92, 95–96.

16. There is one exception: Johannes Stüttgen remembers that Palermo asked fellow student Christof Kohlhöfer to draw a line between windows for the 1969 exhibition *Klasse Beuys* in the Städtisches Museum Trier. Kohlhöfer confirmed in conversation with Susanne Küper that he had received from Palermo a plan of the exhibition space and the planned location of the work. There are no visual records or any other references to this wall drawing; see Johannes Stüttgen, *Der Keilrahmen des Imi Knoebel. 1968/89* (Cologne: Walther König, 1991), 61, and Küper, "Palermo," 285.

17. The most drastic instance of this kind of change is Palermo's work for the exhibition *STRATEGY: GET ARTS*. Palermo never executed the two different initial plans made before arriving in Edinburgh—a wall circumscription, indicated in two drawings in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive and not included in the catalogue raisonné, and a painting of the dado in the staircase, laid out in two drawings of 1970 entitled *Konzept für Edinburgh Treppenhaus II* (Concept for Edinburgh Staircase II; *Wvz* 567–68).

18. Palermo, Letter to Klaus Staeck, 15 April 1969, about his wall drawing for the exhibition *Intermedia '69*, reprinted in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 207–8. Thomas Lange has an insightful discussion of the site-specific decisions Palermo made with respect to his wall painting at the Galerie Ernst in Hanover, discussed below; for example, the location, angle, and breadth of the cloth stripes installed there were determined by the location of electric outlets and windows; see Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 103–5.

19. Drawings for the band are in the archive of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive and not included in the catalogue raisonné; those for the monochrome color area are in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich (*Wvz* 567–68).

20. Gallwitz, unpublished manuscript. Thomas Lange first discussed the archival materials relating to Palermo's wall painting at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden kept at the Karlsruhe archive; see Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 101ff. Fred Jahn confirmed this in conversation with Susanne Küper and also noted that Palermo was interested in selling his wall paintings and drawings, though he never intended to offer certificates of authenticity (which LeWitt issued) and always wanted to remain involved in the execution (which LeWitt did not); see Küper, "Palermo," 16.

21. Palermo quoted in Jappe, "Der Bildraum als Klausur."

22. See Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 104ff.

23. Richter, Letter to Armin Zweite, then at the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, 28 December 1984, in the studio archive of Gerhard Richter, quoted in Küper, "Palermo," 418. The museum acquired one of three versions of Richter's sculptures in 1984. See also Richter in Marcovicz, "*To the People . . .*," 78. The original title was printed on the invitation to the exhibition, one of which is in the collection of the author.

24. See Küper, "Palermo," 440.

25. Ibid., 336.

26. For a discussion of the debates and problems surrounding the Hamburg reconstruction from a conservator's point of view, see Scheidemann, "Wo liegt die Kunst?" 29–36. See also Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 67; Grosser, *Palermo*; and Küper, "Palermo," 501–2.

27. The exhibition was on display from 1 June to 1 September 2000. For the catalogue, see *Object Sculpture*.

28. Küper, "Palermo," 547n2.

29. Corey Strange at the artists' discussion panel of the conference *Four Colors Suffice: Palermo, Art, and Architecture*, 22 October 2005, at the Edinburgh College of Art.

30. Jean-Christophe Ammann described the Lucerne wall drawing as a "framed wall plane" and a "'colorless' 'window to the inside' drawn directly onto the wall"; Ammann, "Zur Ausstellung 'Düsseldorfer Szene,' Kunstmuseum Luzern 15. Juni bis 13. Juli 1969" (1969), in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, 125. It is not included in Palermo's own documentation but is documented extensively in the form of some previously unpublished photographs and correspondence in Küper, "Palermo," 286–97. Palermo also used the form in a drawing on paper tacked onto the wall for the exhibition *Intermedia '69* in Heidelberg. I would not consider this work a wall drawing per se, but see Küper, "Palermo," 298–300.

31. Richter quoted in *Gerhard Richter. Bilder, 1962–1985*, essay by Jürgen Harten, exh. cat. (Cologne: DuMont, and Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle, 1986), 43. Other critics support my argument that Palermo's wall paintings are not conceptual. Anne Rorimer stressed central differences between Palermo and LeWitt in 1978, pointing to the former's site-specificity and to his merging of line and space; see Rorimer, "Palermo: Objects," 32. Philip Ursprung noted another difference that I find less convincing as it implies a misreading of LeWitt's wall drawings and of minimal art as rational. Discussing Palermo's first wall painting (for the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in 1968), Ursprung writes, "As if Sol LeWitt's modular series had been led to absurdity, as if the precise calculations of minimal art were supposed to be mixed up, connected numbers, frames, and angles are recognizable. Their scale is uncertain—their given parameters referred to architecture" (Ursprung, "Zwei Graphiken von Blinky Palermo," in *Giro Annen, Cecile Wick, Blinky Palermo*, 24).

32. For a documentation of the Kabinett's exhibitions, see *Vorhut aus dem Hinterland*.

33. A copy of the film is in René Block's personal archive, Berlin. The photograph (fig. 73) appeared in *Magazin Kunst* 9 (1969): 1294. Two further wall drawings pick up on the motif of vertical lines extending from floor to ceiling: a wall drawing probably executed on behalf of Palermo by Christof Kohlhöfer for the exhibition *Klasse Beuys* in April 1968 at the Städtisches Museum in Trier, and a wall work at de Utrechtse Kring in October 1971. In both cases, lines were centered on walls between windows.

34. See the elevation and ground plan drawings in *Wvz* 520.

35. The German *Raum* means both room and space; see "Sechs Striche und ein Tonband."

36. On the Berlin blockade, see Gerhard Keiderling, *'Rosinenbomber' über Berlin. Währungsreform, Blockade, Luftbrücke, Teilung* (Berlin: Dietz, 1998); *Berlin-Blockade und Luftbrücke, 1948/49*, ed. Uwe Prell and Lothar Wilker (Berlin: Berlin Verlag A. Spitz, 1987). For the exhibition, see *Blockade '69*.

37. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility," in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (1945; London: Routledge, 1962), 109. See Thomas Lange's examination of Palermo's oeuvre from a phenomenological perspective based on the writings of Martin Heidegger in Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*.

38. Merleau-Ponty, "Space," in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 250–51.

39. Palermo, Letter to René Block, 8 February 1969, reproduced in *Blockade '69*, 207. On Christiansen, see Sue Cramer, "Henning Christiansen," *Art + Text* (January 1993): 72; *Henning Christiansen, Ursula Reuter Christiansen*, exh. cat. (Copenhagen: Center for Dansk Billedkunst, 2001).

40. My description is based on the Christiansen piece as it plays in the Sender Freies Berlin film clip mentioned above. Compare the description in "Sechs Striche und ein Tonband," as "incomprehensible babble."

41. Palermo's written note "diagonal Verspannung gelb" on the documentary panel identifies the color as yellow, whereas both photographs and the drawing show it as having an orange tone.

42. Peter Winter, "Ausstellungen in Hannover. Palermos Räume," *Braunschweiger Zeitung* (17 June 1969); Klaus Honnef, "Palermo," in *20 Deutsche*.

43. Susanne Küper explained the unclear drawings included in Palermo's documentation of this work in Küper, "Palermo," 439–40.

44. Susanne Küper argued that harmony and a resulting fulfillment of a utopia, related to this stabilizing effect, was a central concern in all of Palermo's wall paintings and drawings in ibid., 141–43.

45. "Palermos Räume." The material was identified in Küper, "Palermo," 305.

46. Susanne Küper proposes a more elaborate set of types within this body of work: triangles above doors, autonomous forms in rooms, wall circumscriptions, transfers of found forms, painting of architecturally defined planes, paintings of complete walls, and building of color constructions. These types constitute subcategories of my three categories, with the exception of the color constructions, which I consider a new body of work coming both out of the wall paintings and the metal pictures. See the section heads in Küper, "Palermo," chap. 2.

47. Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 83.

48. Helms, "Den Raum erfasst." For the print see *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*.

49. See Max Wechsler, "Palermo," in *Blinky Palermo, 1943–1977*, 36; Küper, "Palermo," 80–81. For a discussion of the material, see Küper, "Palermo," 76, 492; Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 66. See also Lucio Pozzi's reading and later intervention in Palermo's wall painting, in "Diacronica."

50. See *Wvz* 521, 530–31, 542–52, 585–88, 590. Susanne Küper describes the scant evidence for the execution of the Lisson wall drawing in Küper, "Palermo," 412–13.

51. Palermo's comments are on the documentary panel for the Lisson Gallery wall drawing; see *Wvz* 588. Fred Jahn told Susanne Küper that the Friedrich wall circumscription was also based on the measurement of a hand's breadth; see Küper, "Palermo," 397.

52. See *Minimal Art: Andre, Bladen, Flavin, Grosvenor, Judd, LeWitt, Morris, Smith, Smithson, Steiner*, essay by Karl Ruhrberg, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1969); *Ausstellungen bei Konrad Fischer. Düsseldorf, Oktober 1967–Oktober 1992* (Bielefeld: Edition Marzona, 1993).

53. *Dokumenta Dokumente, 1955–1968. Vier Internationale Ausstellungen Moderner Kunst, Texte und Fotografien*, ed. Dieter Westecker (Kassel: Wenderoth, 1972), 179–80. The Leverkusen show was accompanied by an extensive catalogue that included a historical survey of art environments by Rolf Wedewer; see *Räume und Environments*, exh. cat. (Leverkusen: Städtisches Museum Leverkusen, 1969). For environments and related exhibitions in France, see Pierre Restany, "Environnement" and "Musées," in Restany and Pierre Cabanne, *L'Avant-garde au xxe siècle* (Paris: André Balland, 1969), 235–37, 360–67. A comprehensive text by Klaus Hoffmann, "Die Expansion der Künste," included a time chart; it appeared in *Magazin Kunst* 35, no. 9 (1969): 1279–99. See also Bernhard Kerber, "Skulptur und Farbe," *Kunstforum International* 60 (April 1983): 77ff.

54. Gotthard Graubner, Interview, in Rolf-Gunter Dienst, *Noch Kunst. Neuestes aus deutschen Ateliers* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1970), 114.

55. Allan Kaprow, "The Shape of the Art Environment" (1968), in Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 92–93. Contemporary definitions either cite Kaprow or follow his terms; see *Räume und Environments*, 13, 21; Restany, "Environnement," 235–36.

56. Karin Thomas, *Kunst Praxis Heute. Eine Dokumentation der aktuellen Ästhetik* (Cologne: DuMont, 1972), 37. See also Jürgen Claus, *Expansion der Kunst. Beiträge zu Theorie und Praxis öffentlicher Kunst* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1970), 54.

57. Franz Erhard Walther, "Der andere Werkbegriff," *Kunstforum International* 29 (1978): 103.

58. Few historical studies systematize this important phenomenon with respect to German art in the 1960s. Exceptions are Martin Damus, *Kunst in der BRD, 1945–1990* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1995), chaps. 5, 6; Marie Louise Syring, *Um 1968. Konkrete Utopien in Kunst und Gesellschaft*, exh. cat. (Cologne: DuMont, 1990). See also my own discussion of the magazine *Interfunktionen*, an important venue for debates about art and politics, in "Continental Schrift: The Magazine *Interfunktionen*," *Artforum* (May 2004): 178–83, 233.

59. Rolf Wedewer, "Räume und Environments," in *Räume und Environments*, 29; Udo Kultermann, *Neue Formen des Bildes* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1969), 66. Related to environments in this regard are the participatory projects exhibited in the 1972 *Szene Rhein Ruhr* and Documenta 5 exhibitions. The premise of the socialization of art also runs through Thomas, *Kunst Praxis Heute*.

60. The literature on this period is extensive. See, for example, Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity and Blackwell, 1993), 29–58; Ernst Deuerlein, *Deutschland, 1963–1970* (Hanover: Fackelträger, 1972), 103ff. For relevant primary source documents, see *Deutsche Geschichte, 1962–1983. Dokumente in zwei Bänden*, ed. Irmgard Wilharn (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985), 36–46, 143–97.

61. *Räume und Environments; B76: La Biennale di Venezia* (Venice: n.p., 1976), 1:187–200.

62. See El Lissitzky, "Prounenraum," *G. Material zur elementaren Gestaltung* (July 1923); translation in *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*, ed. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 361. *Proun* is an acronym for Project for the Affirmation of the New.

63. Allan Kaprow, "Notes on the Creation of a Total Art" (1958), reprinted in Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 10–11.

64. *Blockade '69, B76: La Biennale di Venezia*, 188. Other examples include works in Documenta 5, *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* in Edinburgh, *Intermedia '69* in Heidelberg, and the *14 x 14* exhibition series in Baden-Baden.

65. Max Brüderlin, "Postmoderne Seele und Geometrie," 104; Glozer, "Kreuzzug im Tunnel." Peter Winter calls the wall paintings "minimal environments" in Winter, "Ausstellungen in Hannover."

66. Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 61.

67. Ibid., 63.

68. Susanne Küper also noted a brown arrow that Palermo drew on the floor in the early Berlin and Bremerhaven wall drawings, reminiscent of Beuys's drawing on the floor in his classroom, and that he painted the tape recorder brown; see Küper, "Palermo," 147, 279.

69. Joseph Beuys in an interview with Rolf-Gunter Dienst, in Dienst, *Noch Kunst*, 40. See also Robert Morris, *Untitled (Corner Piece)* (1964), which has a perceptual effect similar to that of Palermo's cloth bracing. Palermo and Beuys may have known this piece through possible conversations with Morris in October 1964 when he visited Düsseldorf to exhibit at Galerie Schmela (which was focused on his lead reliefs) and to perform at the Düsseldorf art academy.

70. "Kristin Heisterkamp," in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 14.

71. "Arbeiten von Palermo in der Galerie Friedrich, Quadratur des Raumes"; Ahorn, "Leere Wand und ein langes Tonband"; "Striche an der Wand, Zuschauer fühlten sich veralbert." See also Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 88.

72. See the photograph of Palermo painting the wall for the Friedrich exhibition with a commercial brush and a bucket of paint reproduced in *Flash Art* (September–October 1972): 7. Küper researched some of the specific paints Palermo used; see "Palermo," 397, 476, 492.

73. Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 63, 66–67.

74. See F. Aspetsberger and G. A. Höfler, "*Querelle des Modernen*. Die Erhebung des Banalen," and Peter Straser, "Über das Banale," in Aspetsberger and Höfler, eds., *Banal und Erhaben—es ist (nicht) alles eins* (Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag, 1997), 8, 13–28; Lucien Jerphagnon, *De la banalité: Essai sur l'ipséité et sa durée-vécue, durée personelle et co-durée* (Paris: Vrin, 1965).

75. Helms, "Den Raum erfasst."

76. Palermo, cited in "Gegen die Anti-Kunst?" Many critics and scholars, including myself, have long assumed, based on ambiguously mounted photographs by Palermo, that he painted the dado on facing walls in reverse symmetry. Susanne Küper, based on her interview with the late Konrad Fischer, posits by contrast that the wall painting was on only one wall. Fischer may have misremembered, but I consider that unlikely; see Küper, "Palermo," 344. When the wall painting was reconstructed for the exhibition *The Object Sculpture* at the Henry Moore Institute in 2000, it was painted on only one wall. The catalogue explained: "On the opposite walls of the exhibition space, he [Palermo] presented two bands of color. One stretched from the top of the wall to the floor, the other side showed an ascending staircase. Following the relocation of Galerie Konrad Fischer, the painting was reconstructed on the gallery wall of their new premises" (*Object Sculpture*, 162). Michael Walker, the technician who planned the reconstruction in consultation with Fischer's widow, Dorothee Fischer, understood "'the two bands of colour' on 'opposite walls' [to] refer to two separate works. One is described simply as stretching from the top of the wall to the floor [possibly a vertical, rather than diagonal, band?] and the other is described more specifically as showing an 'ascending staircase.' I'm assuming this was the only piece remade when the gallery moved" (Walker, Email to the author, 18 February 2006). I have not found any documentation for or information on this supposed second work.

77. For precise explanation of the reduction, see Küper, "Palermo," 63, 392, 405.

78. See note 140, below, for a comparison of Palermo's and Ellsworth Kelly's use of found forms; Kelly's *Window, Museum of Modern Art, Paris*, was also based on the copy of a window frame in the form of a painting.

79. From a series of comments by visitors recorded by Jan Zumbrink, one of the student organizers of the exhibition, in a letter to Palermo, reproduced in Küper, "Palermo," 473.

80. Based on the minutes of a meeting of an art commission in Mönchengladbach, located in the archive of the Städtisches Museum am Abteiberg Mönchengladbach, Küper concluded that the proposal for the school was not executed "among other things because of the objection of the architect Olaf Jacobsen," who pleaded for a "more meaningful design" ("Palermo," 74, 462). I would add that the architecture seems so dominant in this one case that one is led to speculate whether Palermo would not himself have considered the proposal unsuccessful. Following a phone conversation with the Schulamt of the city of Mönchengladbach in February 1999, I confirmed that the building today houses the Bischöfliche Marienschule and is located at Viersener Strasse 209.

81. Palermo, quoted in Seidenfaden, "Kunst-Pavillon."

82. Lange emphasized the commonplace, residential nature of the architecture in his reading of the Galerie Ernst wall painting in Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 103.

83. For a sketch of the wall drawing that he made on top of a photograph of the space, now in the Palermo Archive in Millerton, N.Y., Palermo stopped his lines when they hit the furniture, rather than drawing over it, thus keeping a place for it in his work. The photograph shows that the furniture did move between the time Palermo conceived the wall drawing and the time the final photograph was taken for the documentation: the lamp moved from the front room to the back room and the cabinet was placed centrally against the wall, as opposed to closer to the door. It is unclear whether Palermo initiated these changes or not.

84. See Küper, "Palermo," 482.

85. Richter has objected to an unqualified use of the term *banality* to discuss his work, and I hope to provide a more nuanced use of the term here. As Richter noted, "I just want to get away from the label: 'He paints the banalities of life and that's all,' . . . I want to at least correct it. *Banality* means a little bit more than *unimportant*. . . . I mentioned 'the banality of evil' in order to show that banality has at some point been described as something horrific" (Interview with Robert Storr, in *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, exh. cat. [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002], 294). The reference to Hannah Arendt's book clarifies Richter's view that banality may be figured in his work but it is important and meaningful, layered and complex. He is trying to distinguish between what the work is about and what it is as art.

86. See correspondence by the curators to Palermo in the Documenta Archiv, Kassel.

87. See *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976; Cadere. Köpcke. Palermo.*

88. For foundational texts on institutional critique, see Daniel Buren's essays "The Function of the Studio" (1971), *October* 10 (1979): 51–58, "Function of the Museum," *Artforum* (September 1973): 68, and "Function of an Exhibition," *Studio International* (December 1973): 216. See also Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art, 1962–1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105–43; Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), esp. 13ff.

89. Michael Asher, *Writings, 1973–1983, on Works, 1969–1979*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 83.

90. My thanks to David Reed for sharing this information with me. In his forthcoming essay on Palermo, Reed also argues for a dialogue between Asher and Palermo in the works they created at Documenta 5; see Reed, "Exchange," in *Palermo: To the People of New York City.*

91. Schwarz, "Minimales."

92. Glozer, "Freundschaftsbildnisse."

93. Blase, "Frevel der Einfachheit."

94. Forster, "Das Nichts kostet 3 DM."

95. See Grosser, *Palermo*, 185–93.

96. Only the interior view is documented in the Werkverzeichnis; *Wvz* 590.

97. See Buren, "The Function of the Studio." For a reading of this wall painting as mysterious because of the polarity it posits between accessibility and inaccessibility see Johannes Cladders, "'Unzugänglich—Zugänglich' Im Kontext der 60er und 70er Jahre," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 21.

98. The blue triangle multiple kit is considered part of Palermo's print oeuvre and is hence included in the catalogue raisonné of prints; see *Palermo. Die Gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, 18–19. I think it is likely that Palermo considered the results of the multiple, that is the blue triangles painted over doors in various locations, as examples of his wall paintings because his wall painting documentation at the Kunstmuseum Bonn includes several versions of a blue triangle wall painting, including the outline of a project entitled *Dreieck über einer Tür* (Triangle over a Door; *Wvz* 594a) and cardboards with photographs showing several executions of blue triangles painted over doors, for example in Franz Dahlem's and in Six Friedrich's apartment (1971; *Wvz* 594b) and at the front and back doors of Christoph Hülsey's house (1972; *Wvz* 601). For a reproduction of the realization at the Galerie Klein, Bonn, not included in the documentation, see *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 216. However, it is unlikely that Palermo used an actual kit from the multiple edition for the executions of these triangles.

99. For the unexecuted works, see Dieter Ronte's recollection in *Palermo. Bilder, Objekte, Zeichnungen*, 12; and *Wvz* 591 a, 591 b, and 579. See also Küper, "Palermo," 461–68, 531–32, 534–35. The Mönchengladbach and Freiburg proposals were rejected; the Cologne project did not move forward because of lack of funds.

100. Interview with Robert Storr, in *Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, 294.

101. The following description is based on the program reprinted in *Grafik des Kapitalistischen Realismus*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Galerie René Block, 1971), 31–35, and in Susanne Küper, "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter: 'Leben mit Pop —Eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus,'" *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 53 (1992), as well as on the more detailed report released after the event and first published in Rolf-Gunter Dienst, *Pop Art. Eine kritische Information* (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1965), 138–40.

102. Report in Dienst, *Pop Art*, 138.

103. Ibid., 138–39.

104. See Martin Hentschel, "Die Ordnung des Heterogenen: Sigmar Polkes Werk bis 1986," Ph.D. diss., Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 1991, chap. 4.

105. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Polke und das Grosse

Triviale (mythisch oder pythisch?)," in *Sigmar Polke. Bilder, Tücher, Objekte: Werkauswahl, 1962–1971*, exh. cat. (Tübingen: Kunsthalle, 1976), 143.

106. For illustrations see *Ich nenne mich als Maler Konrad Lueg*, essay by Thomas Kellein, exh. cat. (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle, 1999), esp. ills. 50–105.

107. Hans Strelow, untitled essay in *Konrad Lueg. Waschlappen und Handtücher*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Galerie René Block, 1966), reprinted in *Ich nenne mich als Maler Konrad Lueg*, 32. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the economic miracle and Richter and Lueg's *Leben mit Pop*, see Küper, "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter."

108. René Block in Stella Baum, "Die frühen Jahre. Gespräche mit/über Galeristen," *Kunstforum International* 104 (November–December 1989): 256; Heinz Ohff, "Über die Notwendigkeit von Krokodilen in der Kunst oder: Der kapitalistische Realismus," *Kunst* 5–6 (November–January 1964): 127.

109. Buchloh, "Polke und das Grosse Triviale," 143, and 135–150; *Gerhard Richter*, Band 2: *Texte*, essays by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Peter Gidal, and Birgit Pelzer, exh. cat. (Bonn: Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1993). Susanne Küper has argued that German pop was cynical, especially in comparison with American pop art; see Küper, "Konrad Lueg and Gerhard Richter," 301.

110. Honnef, "Palermo," in *20 Deutsche*.

111. The graphic designer Reinhard Herrmann taught Palermo illustration, probably in his second semester, and remembered him as an "independent and talented student"; Anja Dikow (Fachhochschule Münster), Email to the author, 21 December 1999. See also Nolte, Interview about Palermo. On the Werkkunstschulen, see F. G. Winter, *Gestalten. Didaktik oder Urprinzip? Ergebnis und Kritik des Experiments Werkkunstschulen, 1949–1971* (Ravensburg: Otto Maier Verlag, 1977).

112. See, e.g., Helms, "Den Raum erfasst."

113. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (1978; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 44, 46, 53; Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790; Hamburg: Meiner, 1990), 62ff.

114. Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, 54.

115. Ibid., 63. The frame figures also as a central metaphor for the process of deconstruction, "a certain repeated dislocation, a regulated, irrepressible dislocation, which makes the frame in general crack, undoes it at the corners in its quoins and joints, turns its internal limit into an external limit, takes its thickness into account, makes us see the picture from the side of the canvas or the wood, etc." (74).

116. Pfeiffer, "Palermo," 117.

117. "Gespannte Dreiecke aus Stoff." See also Klaus Honnef's comment: "Despite the brittle geometric formal language, the result is occasionally reminiscent of baroque wall paintings" (Honnef, "Palermo," in *20 Deutsche*).

118. A former employee of the Galerie Ernst relayed this to Susanne Küper; see Küper, "Palermo," 59. To "snap a chalk line" one uses "chalk line," a string covered in chalk, attaches it on two ends, and snaps it against the wall to create a straight line that can then be traced.

119. The room measures around nineteen by eleven meters and is about six meters tall. For Palermo's use of the term *ausschmücken*, see the record of a phone conversation dated 22 May 1970 in Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, folder 550. See also Binder-Hagelstange, "Viel Mühe mit dem Kitsch." Visitors to the exhibition described the phenomenological effect as such: "The large hall is vastly empty" (Wurster, "Melancholie des Trivialen"), and "One perceives the room as transformed architecture. One focuses on the blue edging, which disrupts the habitual experience of the room" (Karlheinz Nowald, "Baden-Baden. 14 × 14 in der Staatlichen Kunsthalle, Kulturbericht aus Baden und der Pfalz," Akte 550/86–88, 21 June 1970, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe). As materials in the Karlsruhe archive show, Palermo exhibited a sequence of drawings in the adjacent room; see Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 110n168, 121ff.

Lange's argument about the wall paintings is structurally similar to mine in that he also works out a sliding from one conceptual pole into another. Lange specifically argues for a movement back and forth between two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality, between picture and space, between reconstruction of experience in the documentation and the actual experience of exhibition visitors. For example, Lange's reading of the Baden-Baden wall painting focuses on the specific location of the blue stripe immediately beneath the stucco frieze, in a border zone between the flat wall and a projecting plastic relief. Lange does not, however, elaborate on the important role that decoration plays in the wall paintings, nor does he consider the way in which these works relate to their historical context; see Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, esp. 113–17.

120. "Umriss der Planung für Düsseldorfer-Ausstellung in Edinburgh, Gespräch Dr. Jappe, Günther Uecker, Ruhrberg am Freitag den 15. 5. 1970, vorausgegangen: Gespräch

Jappe mit Uecker, Filliou, Graubner, Kolhöfer [*sic*], Luther, Palermo, Polke, Richter," exhibition files in the Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf, IV 32966 Edinburgh 1970.

121. Palermo's documentation includes a drawing for a blue triangle over an arched doorway. See *Wvz* 587a. The "Palermo Restore Project" concluded that the drawing was probably never executed. There is no evidence for the work among the archival material for the exhibition at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, and no photographs could be found. Küper assumes that the work was made, however; see Küper, "Palermo," 313.

122. In his talk at the conference *Four Colors Suffice*, Thomas Lange related the Edinburgh wall painting to a later wall painting in Hamburg, for which Palermo cited Philipp Otto Runge, who had planned a cycle of four wall paintings related to the times of day for a chapel he had designed.

123. Guy Brett, "Düsseldorf Baroque," *The Times* (London) (25 August 1970). For the exhibition, see *STRATEGY: GET ARTS*. Related archival material collected by Demarco, including photographs and reviews of the exhibition, is in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive.

124. Kenneth Dingwall, an emeritus faculty member at the College of Art, supplied information about the scarves in Edinburgh in conversation with the author, 22 October 2005. There were two scarves: one had a blue field with red, yellow, and white lines, the other had 1.5-inch-wide stripes in red, yellow, blue, and white. For Palermo's plan to include a flag, see an undated list of works planned for the exhibition and "Umriss der Planung für Düsseldorfer-Ausstellung in Edinburgh," exhibition files in the Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf. Traditionally, wall paintings have frequently been used for heraldic purposes.

125. See *Documenta 5. Befragung der Realität, Bildwelten heute.*

126. Küper, "Palermo," 79, 65.

127. According to Richter, Palermo used the term *Münchener Ocker;* see Küper, "Palermo," 418; Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 77. Fred Jahn, interviewed by Pia Gottschaller, referred to the tone as *Bayerischer Ocker* and recalled that "Palermo was preoccupied by the 'Bavarian idea between classicism and baroque, between ocher and measure,' and that he had expressed his wish to choose a color for the wall painting that related to Munich" (Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 66n396). The Ludwigskirche was built between 1829 and 1844 by Friedrich von Gärtner and decorated with frescoes by Peter von Cornelius. The interior polychrome decoration, especially the blue ceiling with its regular pattern of small golden stars, is structured by means of golden frames; the frescoes are dominated by ocher tones. On the Ludwigskirche, see Oswald Hederer, *Friedrich von Gärtner, 1792–1847* (Munich: Prestel, 1976), 96, 99. My thanks to Pia Gottschaller for sharing her knowledge of Munich.

128. *Ornament? Ohne Ornament*, exh. cat. (Zurich: Kunstgewerbemuseum, 1965); *Ornamentale Tendenzen in der zeitgenössischen Malerei*, essays by Hans-Heinz Holz et al., exh. cat. (Leverkusen: Städtisches Museum, 1968); Klaus Hoffmann, *Neue Ornamentik. Die ornamentalische Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: DuMont, 1970). See also Rolf-Gunter Dienst, *Deutsche Kunst. Eine Neue Generation* (Cologne: DuMont, 1970), sec. 9, n.p.; Juliane Roh, "Die Wiederkehr des Ornaments," in Roh, *Deutsche Kunst der 60er Jahre. Malerei, Collage, Op-Art, Graphik* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1971); and Heinz Ohff, *Pop und die Folgen, oder, Die Kunst, Kunst auf der Strasse zu finden* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1968), 180.

129. Hoffmann, *Neue Ornamentik*, 156.

130. Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, 45.

131. Hans-Heinz Holz, *Ornamentale Tendenzen*, n.p., republished in sections in "Ornamentale Tendenzen," *Artis* 20 (July 1968): 11–16. See also Holz's review of the 1965 Zurich exhibition *Ornament überall?* in *Sonntagsbeilage der National-Zeitung Basel* 372 (15 August 1965); Claus, *Expansion der Kunst*, 47, 45. See also Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen. Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (1893; Munich: Mäander, 1985); E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (London: Phaidon, 1979), chap. 9.

132. See Peter Borowsky, "Innenpolitische und wirtschaftliche Krisenerscheinungen 1963 bis 1966," and "Die Grosse Koalition und die Überwindung der Wirtschaftskrise," in Peter Borowsky, *Deutschland, 1945–1969* (Hanover: Fackelträger, 1993), 271–94, 295–312; Markovits and Gorski, *German Left*, 59–78.

133. *Ornament and Abstraction* was the title of a recent exhibition at the Fondation Beyeler in Basel. The accompanying catalogue gives a broad overview and focuses on non-Western ornament but engages the subject neither on a conceptual level (working out different paradigms of the relation) nor on a historical one (focusing on the decorative practices of abstract artists, for example); see *Orna-*

ment and Abstraction: The Dialogue Between Non-Western, Modern, and Contemporary Art, ed. Markus Brüderlin, exh. cat. (Basel: Fondation Beyeler, and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Excellent case studies of one historical relationship between abstraction and decoration are found in Nancy Troy's *The DeStijl Environment* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983); Jenny Anger, *Paul Klee and the Decorative in Modern Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

134. Maurice Denis, "From Gauguin and Van Gogh to Classicism" (1909), trans. Belinda Thomson, in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 54. Henri Matisse, "Notes of a Painter" (1908) and "Interview with Verdet" (1952), in Jack D. Flam, *Matisse on Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1973), 36, 142–43.

135. Wassily Kandinsky, "Reminiscences/Three Pictures" (1913), in *Wassily Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (New York: DaCapo, 1994), 370. See also Kandinsky, "Cologne Lecture" (1914), 399.

136. Clement Greenberg, "Milton Avery" (1957), in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4:43. See also Donald Kuspit, "The Decorative," in Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 57–86.

137. Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, 56.

138. Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 87. See also Jean-Loup Korzilius's argument that Palermo used neutral colors in order to avoid an impression of the decorative in Korzilius, "Du 'Désespoir du bleuet,'" 865.

139. Susanne Küper, "Wandzeichnungen und Wandmalereien," in *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 138; Küper, "Palermo," 59–60. Concern about the decorative was not limited to the reception of Palermo's spaces; it also entered the discussion about contemporary environments. For example, the 1976 Venice Biennale catalogue stated that environments defined the building as "a space limited by six surfaces—the walls, the floor and the ceiling—otherwise called 'the room,' humanly speaking. Refusing to consider the artwork a 'decorative object,' the exhibition considered it an element inserted into the spatial totality of the surrounding milieu and belonging to a structural system" (*B76: La Biennale di Venezia*, 264).

140. In Ellsworth Kelly's paintings done in France, found and transferred abstraction finds an elaborate treatment in the context of noncompositional strategies; see Yve-Alain Bois, "Ellsworth Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises," in *Ellsworth Kelly: The Years in France, 1948–1954*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1992), 14. Most obviously, Kelly and Palermo both made use of a found window, Kelly in his *Window, Museum of Modern Art, Paris* (1949) and Palermo in the wall paintings in Bremerhaven and Munich. But Kelly was less interested in the role of decoration and rarely disclosed the banal referent; during his years in France he was not concerned with perceptual effects. Buchloh argues for a continuity between Palermo and Kelly's work in Buchloh, "Einheimisch, Unheimlich, Fremd," 171. The only opportunity Palermo had during his lifetime to see Kelly's *Window* was in the exhibition *Art of the Real*, at the Grand Palais, Paris, 14 November–23 December 1968, and at the Kunsthaus Zürich, 18 January–18 February 1969. See the exhibition history for the painting in Kelly's archive in Spencertown, N.Y.

141. For the original reference to the pinball machine, see Fred Jahn, "Für eine Ausstellung," in *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 137. For Gottschaller's discussion, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 44–45. Susanne Küper first made the connection to the machine at Ratinger Hof but not in the context of the title in Küper, "Palermo," 91. Both Küper and Gottschaller also refer to the painting by Palermo's academy friend Norbert Tadeusz depicting Palermo playing the pinball machine, which is, in Gottschaller's words, "a definite visual document of the existence of the flipper pattern." The oil sketch for the painting is in the collection of Fred Jahn, Munich.

142. Georg Jappe has pointed to the experience of standing in an almost empty room that is the "echo form of painting" (Jappe, "Der Bildraum als Klausur"). Johannes Meinhardt argues that the wall becoming painting, "das Umschlagen der Wand in Malerei," is at the core of Palermo's wall paintings; see Meinhardt, "Blinky Palermo: Materialistische Aura," in *Ende der Malerei*, 173.

143. The later installations involving steel and glass conceptually depart from the wall paintings as discussed in this chapter in a significant way and can be understood only in the context of Palermo's metal pictures, as Chapter 4 will show. By contrast, Palermo scholars commonly group the later installations with the wall paintings; see most recently Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 68; Küper, "Palermo," 534ff. Gottschaller uncovered important evidence that Palermo continued to think about wall paintings during his time in New York. She discovered a 1975 "sketch [that] shows a corner with two adjacent walls painted 'brick red,' framed by a border at the transitions between wall/ceiling and wall/floor. Presumably Palermo pictured a space at 141 Wooster Street, New York City" (*Palermo*, 68n417).

144. For details on Palermo's initial and eventual choices of paint and tools, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 66–67. For details of the controversial reception of this particular wall painting, see Grosser, *Palermo*. Compare Thomas Lange's reading of the work in terms of the dichotomy of space and picture, as exemplified in my summary of his discussion of the Baden-Baden painting above, in Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 129–34.

Chapter 4. Metal Pictures, 1973–1977

1. To my knowledge the first use of the term *Metallbilder* was by curator Gerhard Storck in the context of his 1977 Palermo exhibition, for which he closely worked with the artist; see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*.

2. A high school friend of Palermo's recalls Palermo's interest in contemporary American music: his particular favorites were Ornette Coleman, Coleman Hawkins, and Thelonious Monk (Nolte, Interview about Palermo). Horst Richter notes that this interest later facilitated Palermo's access to the subculture of New York City; see Horst Richter, "Palermo. Die Landung, 1965," 142. On Palermo's interest in Beat literature, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 21. On the Creamcheese bar, see Stephan von Wiese, "Creamcheese—Eine Kneipe als Forum der Kunst," in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, 120–21; my own "Creamcheese, or the Art of Being Minor," in *The Metal Party*, ed. Josiah McElheny (New York: Public Art Fund, 2002); and Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 30. Palermo's last girlfriend recalls his desire for an American car; see "Babett Scobel" in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 47.

3. "Neue Abstraktion—New Abstraction," *Das Kunstwerk* 18 (April–June 1965), special issue. Palermo's painting, which is either lost or destroyed, was reproduced in color in *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 118. In a photograph dating from 1965, the painting hangs on the wall of Palermo's studio in the Düsseldorf academy, the so-called Raum 19, which he shared with Imi Giese, Jörg Immendorff, and Imi Knoebel; see *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 51. Palermo's contribution to the 1974 portfolio *Amerikas Hommage à Picasso* (America's Homage to Picasso) perhaps also stems from his fascination with the United States and the relation of American to European art. His lithograph was based on an earlier work on paper, probably the one seen in a 1963 photograph of Palermo and his first wife, Ingrid Kohlhöfer, which appears slightly different from a 1965 oil on paper drawing in the catalogue raisonné. See *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, cat. 35; *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 19; and *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis.* Band 2, ill. 291. Henceforth illustrations will be referred to by "*Wvz*" and the illustration number.

4. Mel Bochner, Phone conversations with the author, April 2001 and October 2005. Bochner notes that he and Palermo went to the Creamcheese afterward and played Flipper. Bochner added that Fischer liked the hostility between German and American artists "because it made him far-out and gave him an identity."

5. See comparisons of Palermo's art to American art in Grosser, *Palermo*, 123–25. In one of the most sophisticated essays on the topic, the late Stefan Germer warned that Palermo's assimilation of American subculture and adaptation of an American name does not necessarily translate into his art. He argues, by contrast, that Palermo's disciplined lightness and musicality distinguish him from his American peers; Stefan Germer, "Intersecting Visions," in *German and American Art from Beuys to Warhol*, 25–26.

6. Grüterich, exhibition review of "Palermo Stoffbilder," 162; Barnett Newman quotation presented as relevant to Palermo's work in his posthumous representation in *Documenta 6*, exh. cat. (Kassel: Dierichs, 1977). Rein, "Das Gedächtnis des Auges."

7. At other times, central tenets of minimalist art in Palermo's work were pointed out without these necessarily being labeled as such—for example an interest in the picture as object, a sense of wholeness, or a rejection of illusionism. See Rinn, "Palermo," 108; Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 63; Levin, "Minimalizers"; "Mit Nadel und Faden"; Kruschwitz, "Farbe. Übergreifende Struktur"; Affentranger-Kirchrath, "Wie ein Hauch"; Karl Ruhrberg, *Die Malerei unseres Jahrhunderts* (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1987); P. Bode, "Palermo"; Pfeiffer, "Palermo," 117; Rorimer, "Palermo: Objects," 34; Wechsler, "Bescheidene Form von Schönheit," 10; Meinhardt, "Blinky Palermo: Materialistische Aura," in Meinhardt, *Ende der Malerei*, 173; and *Galerien Maximilianstrasse München. Architektur, Räume, Projekte.*

8. See, for example, Ohff, *Pop und die Folgen, oder, Die Kunst, Kunst auf der Strasse zu finden* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1968), 23; *5 × 30 Düssseldorfer Kunstszene aus fünf Generationen, 50 Jahre Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, 1829–1979*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Kunstverein und Städtische Kunsthalle, 1979), n.p.; and Levin, "Minimalizers."

9. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Einheimisch, Unheimlich, Fremd," 170; Stefan Germer, "Intersecting Visions," 25–26.

10. *Deutsche Kunst seit 1960*, 47; Smith, "Objects and Fabric Paintings"; Grosser, *Palermo*, 17–18, 136. Julian Schnabel owned the untitled cloth picture *Wvz* 96. It has since changed owners. Schnabel also refers to Palermo in some of his paintings.

11. Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 64, translation slightly modified. For a discussion of the problem of derivativeness, see Graevenitz, "Ein stiller Ketzer."

12. Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 179; see also 163–80.

13. Ibid., 163–80.

14. Ibid., 179–80.

15. "Kunst in New York," *Das Kunstwerk* 19 (April–June 1966), special issue.

16. For Palermo's friends reading *Art International*, see Susanne Küper, "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter. 'Leben mit Pop—Eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus,'" *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 53 (1992): 296; *Ich nenne mich als Maler Konrad Lueg*, essay by Thomas Kellein, exh. cat. (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1999), 27; Martin Hentschel, "Solve et Coagula," in *Sigmar Polke. Die drei Lügen der Malerei*, exh. cat. (Bonn: Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle, 1994), 41–42; and Germer, "Intersecting Visions," 19, 33. The subscription dates were given by Dawn Leach at the archive of the Düsseldorf academy in an email to the author on 31 January 2000. The information about Palermo's difficulties with English comes from his high school friend Herbert Nolte in Nolte, Interview About Palermo. Students at the Düsseldorf academy also passed around exhibition catalogues; see Manfred de la Motte, "Junge Deutsche Maler nach Pop," *Art International* 10 (20 February 1966): 20.

17. See Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 19. Bernhart Schwenk notes that Palermo gained access to contemporary American art and artists through Heiner Friedrich's gallery in Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 28. Despite Beuys's supposed connections to Robert Morris after the latter's visit to Düsseldorf in 1964, his role in introducing Palermo to American art was probably less important; see Jean-Christophe Ammann, "Schweizer Brief," 67.

18. Brice Marden, Conversation with the author, 11 December 1997. See also *Concept Art, Minimal Art, Arte Povera, Land Art. Sammlung Marzona*, 12; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 163.

19. For Beuys's claim that Palermo attended the dance evening, see Glozer, "On Blinky Palermo," 62, though some of the information he provides is incorrect; see Chapter 1, note 44, above. For the German dealers' communal trip to New York, see Hans-Jürgen Müller, *Kunst kommt nicht von Können. Über die Schwierigkeiten beim Umgang mit zeitgenössischer Kunst. Ein Streifzug durch die sechziger Jahre* (Nuremberg: Belser, 1976), 70.

20. For these two private collections, see Gerd von der Osten and Horst Keller, *Kunst der Sechziger Jahre. Sammlung Ludwig im Wallraf-Richartz Museum* (Cologne, 1970); *Sammlung 1968 Karl Ströher*. For extensive documentation of German museum acquisitions of American art, see *Amerikanische Kunst von 1945 bis heute. Kunst der USA in europäischen Sammlungen*, ed. Dieter Honisch and Jens Christian Jensen, exh. cat. (Cologne: DuMont, 1976). This catalogue of American art in European collections appeared in conjunction with the exhibition *New York in Europe* at the Nationalgalerie Berlin and includes detailed statistics.

21. For the German catalogue of the exhibition, see *Minimal Art: Andre, Bladen, Flavin, Grosvenor, Judd, LeWitt, Morris, Smith, Smithson, Steiner*, essay by Karl Ruhrberg, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1969). For reviews, see Hanno Reuther, review of Minimal Art exhibition at Kunsthalle and Kunstverein Düsseldorf, *Das Kunstwerk* 22 (February–March 1969): 74–75; "Minimal Art," *Artis* 21 (February 1969): 41. For Palermo's interest in *Formen der Farbe*, see Chapter 2, note 59, above.

22. As director of the Kunsthalle Basel, Arnold Rüdlinger, who was later involved in the organization of some Documenta exhibitions, first traveled to the United States in 1957 and subsequently introduced Abstract Expressionism to Europe. See *'60 '80, Attitudes Concepts Images: A Selection from Twenty Years of Visual Arts*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1982), 1098. Documenta 2 included Barnett Newman's *Cathedra* and *Tundra* paintings. Documenta 3 featured Ellsworth Kelly, Jackson Pollock, and American pop art. Documenta 4 included Newman's *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue II, Profile of Light*, and *Voice of Fire*, as well as works by Josef Albers, Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Morris, Ad Reinhardt, and Frank Stella. For the reception of these exhibitions, see *Docu-*

menta—Dokumente 1955–1968. Vier Internationale Ausstellungen Moderner Kunst, Texte und Fotografien, essays by Dieter Westecker et al. (Kassel: Wenderoth, 1972), esp. 169.

In addition to the Documenta exhibitions, the following shows included contemporary American art: *Gegenstandslose Malerei in Amerika* (Nonobjective Painting from America) in Karlsruhe in 1948, *Amerikanische Kunst* (American Art) at the Berliner Festwochen in 1951, *100 Jahre Amerikanische Malerei* (One Hundred Years of American Painting) in Düsseldorf in 1953, *Moderne Kunst aus den USA* (Modern Art from the USA) in Frankfurt in 1955; *New American Painting*, organized by the Museum of Modern Art with venues in Berlin and Basel, accompanied by a Jackson Pollock exhibition in 1959.

23. Phyllis Tuchman, "American Art in Germany: The History of a Phenomenon," *Artforum* 9 (November 1970): 68.

24. For advertisements for these trips, see *Kunst* 19 (February–April 1965): 31; *Artis* 18 (November 1966): 6; *Artis* 19 (March 1967): 4; *Das Kunstwerk* 20 (April–May 1967): 88; *Kunst* 27 (August 1967): back cover; and *Du* 29 (September 1969): 633.

25. See *Documenta—Dokumente 1955–1968*, 169; *Die 60er Jahre. Kölns Weg zur Kunstmetropole Vom Happening zum Kunstmarkt*, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath and Gabriele Lueg, exh. cat. (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1986), 323–24; Klaus Jürgen-Fischer, "Der Amerikanismus in der Kunst der Gegenwart," *Syn* 2 (1966): 54–67; K. O. Götz, "Die Kunstpolitik der Bundesrepublik—Eine Misere," known as the "Düsseldorfer Manifest," insert in *Das Kunstwerk* 16 (March 1964); and Müller, *Kunst kommt nicht von Können*, 98–99.

As has been widely pointed out, many of the anti-American sentiments in the art world were fueled by protests against the Vietnam War and the anti-Americanism of the left, the student movement in particular. A reviewer of the Documenta 4 exhibition links the two directly: "What is there left to do besides minimal art for artists from a nation that wages such a criminal war as the one in Vietnam? Lack of consciousness or covering up or obvious support of the given circumstances are the real alternatives to a publicly sanctioned art" (*Documenta—Dokumente 1955–1968*, 179).

26. Exhibition information is based on miscellaneous magazine coverage at the time. See also Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 31; Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler* (Cologne: DuMont, 2002), 231.

27. "K. F. Interviewed by Georg Jappe," *Studio International* (February 1971): 70.

28. Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 32; Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 21–22. For Palermo and Richter's experiences in New York, see Chapter 5.

29. Nolte, Interview about Palermo.

30. In his application for a visa extension, Palermo wrote, "The owner of the gallery, Mr. Heiner Friedrich, maintains a New York branch and has encouraged and supported my visits to the United States." The application dates from 26 December 1974; Palermo, Statement to INS for reconsideration of the denial of his extension application. See Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 33; Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 22.

31. Nolte, Interview about Palermo; Thordis Moeller, Conversation with the author, 14 March 2006.

32. For these works, see *Wvz* 145, 146, and 148. On Palermo's crisis, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 22, which reports that Palermo's second wife, Kristin, remembers the crisis as being particularly bad following Palermo's return from the Seventh Biennial in Paris, which opened in September 1971. See also Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 34–35, 92–95, which refers to Robin Bruch's description of an unproductive period between December 1973 and the fall of 1974.

33. For a discussion of this wall painting, see Chapter 3. Sabine Grosser has documented its reception in detail in Grosser, *Palermo*, 82–85, 188ff.

34. For the objects dating from that time, see *Wvz* 164–66, 173.

35. Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 76, 86–88. Gottschaller hypothesizes that Palermo may have been influenced in this crucial step by Robert Ryman's work, on view at Galerie Konrad Fischer shortly before Palermo's departure for the United States. The exhibition presented a series of paintings with white enamelac on aluminum and steel; see *Ausstellungen bei Konrad Fischer. Düsseldorf, Oktober 1967–Oktober 1992* (Bielefeld: Edition Marzona, 1993), 99. See also Gottschaller's overview of artist's use of aluminum (*Palermo*, 90–92).

36. See Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 34–35, 92–95; Riese, "Das Ringen um Absolute Form."

37. *Palermo. Wandmalerei*, n.p.; see Grosser, *Palermo*, 146–47 and n. 618; Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 72–73.

38. The untitled 1973 work (*Wvz* 161) appears unsuccessful because it lacks a sense of formal coherence (the different materials and colors do not hold together) and conceptual unity (top and bottom areas deal with different pictorial problems). On this work, the object with spirit level (*Wvz* 163), and Palermo's use of Bleimennige, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 47–48, 54–55, 72–73. Gottschaller particularly connects the use of this paint to Beuys's interest in warmth and conductivity.

39. Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 73; see also 70–75. The catalogue raisonné dates the three monochrome metal works to 1973, but I concur with Gottschaller that it is likely that Palermo began them in 1972 and finished them in 1973. *Wvz* 167 is signed on the back both "Palermo 72" and "Palermo 73," and it is inscribed with the words "not finished," which were later crossed out. Moreover, Palermo wrote in a letter to Evelyn Weiss of 12 August 1975 that he painted the first metal plates around 1972; see *Palermo XIII. Bienal de São Paulo.*

40. Dierk Stemmler argues that the spatial and unified character of these metal pictures makes them more radical than the cloth pictures; in Stemmler, "Zu dieser Ausstellung," in *Palermo (Peter Heisterkamp)*, 103. Bernhart Schwenk notes that the three paintings collapse figure and ground for the last time in Palermo's oeuvre. Their theme, he notes, is "measurement," but it remains unclear how; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 93. One could certainly develop this theme of measurement with respect to the illusionist effects of color. For example, the darkest panel (*Wvz* 167) appears much smaller than the other two, despite having the same measurements.

41. For the exact dating, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 73. Helmut Kruschwitz speaks of a "flight to America" in Kruschwitz, "Farbe. Übergreifende Struktur." Schwenk notes Palermo's love of New York and his fondness for the city's nightlife and bars, mentioning the Spring Street Bar, Peter Rabbit, the Black Horse, Three Roses, and the Terminal Bar, in Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 35. For his speculation about the weight of the new material, see page 93.

42. Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 34–35, 92–95; see also Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 80–82.

43. Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 94.

44. *Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, 116. Palermo was applying for a temporary visa and phrased his application accordingly. He officially continued to "reside" in Germany but had effectively moved to the United States.

45. *Wvz* 184–86, 195–96, 201.

46. *Wvz* 174–75, 187–90.

47. *Wvz* 180–81.

48. Schwenk observes that owing to problems with the adhesiveness of the acrylic on metal, Palermo experimented with a sprayed application, as evinced by the bubbles in the orange section of "Times of the Day II"; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 96.

49. The layers have been well documented in Gottschaller, *Palermo*.

50. Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 23. Schwenk persuasively first argued for the impact of the Rothko Chapel visit in Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 35, 94. The two also saw Walter De Maria's *Las Vegas Piece* (1969) and Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969).

51. Cited in *Palermo XIII. Bienal de São Paulo.*

52. Gottschaller hypothesizes that aluminum might have "symbolized America for him, and steel Germany" (Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 158).

53. *Palermo XIII. Bienal de São Paulo.* Schwenk has referred to the "baroque color intensity" of the metal pictures in Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 35. On copper as a ground for painting, see *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575–1775*, exh. cat. (New York: Oxford University, 1999).

54. See François Delamare and Bernard Guineau, *Colors: The Story of Dyes and Pigments* (New York: Abrams, 2000), 144ff.

55. Gottschaller systematically described and analyzed Palermo's sketchbooks from his time in New York for the first time in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 77–78, 84n492.

56. Thordis Moeller recalled visiting the Kunstmuseum Basel with Palermo in a phone conversation with the author, August 2002.

57. I would disagree with Schwenk's stress on both Palermo's and Rothko's interests in the changing conditions of light as a main point of intersection between their paintings; see "Studien zur Person," 172. In light of these other parallels, it seems a minor aspect of the metal pictures.

58. For foundational texts on minimalism that define these and other qualities of minimalist sculpture, see *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1968); Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," reprinted in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, 1959–1975*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975); Rosalind Krauss, "Allusion and

Illusion in Donald Judd," *Artforum* 4 (May 1966): 24–26; and Phyllis Tuchman, "An Interview with Carl Andre," *Artforum* 8 (June 1970): 55–61.

59. See Jürgen-Fischer, "Der Amerikanismus in der Kunst der Gegenwart," 59, 61; Karl Ruhrberg, *Der Schlüssel zur Malerei von heute* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1965), 399; Jürgen Morschel, *Deutsche Kunst der 60er Jahre. Plastik, Objekte, Aktionen* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1972), 138; Winfred Gaul, "Amerika, hast du es besser? Marginalien zu einem Aufenthalt in New York," *Das Kunstwerk* 16 (March 1963): 2–4, 13; Jean Leering, "Post-Painterly Abstraktion," in *4. Documenta*, essays by Max Imdahl et al., exh. cat. (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum, 1968), 1:xviii; Hans-Peter Riese, "Aufgehängte Kunst" (review of exhibition "Kompass New York"), *Diskus* 18 (January–February 1968): 19; Juliane Roh, review of hard-edge painting exhibition at the Stuttgart Kunstverein, *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim* 65 (April 1967): 9–10; and Jutta Held, "Minimal Art—eine amerikanische Ideologie" (1972), reprinted in *Minimal Art. Eine Kritische Retrospektive*, ed. Gregor Stemmrich (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1995), 444–70.

60. Schwenk argued that Palermo connects his European and American insights in Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 143.

61. For non-illustrated works, see *Wvz* 190, 180–81.

62. See Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 120, and *Wvz* 178.

63. Cited in *Palermo XIII. Bienal de São Paulo.*

64. For more details on the layers, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 120ff.

65. See ibid., 23.

66. Back cover of *Palermo. Wandmalerei* (1973). Thomas Lange has shown that Palermo added "(red—yellow—blue)" to the passage and modified its phrasing slightly from the original 1840 publication; see Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 139n226.

67. Döring, "Palermo malt den Kunstverein aus"; Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 141n230.

68. On Runge's times of day works, see Richard Littlejohns, "Philipp Otto Runge's *Tageszeiten* and Their Relationship to Romantic Nature Philosophy," *Studies in Romanticism* 42 (Spring 2003). On Runge's architectural plans, see Stephan Waetzoldt, "Philipp Otto Runges *Vier Zeiten* und ihre Konstruktionszeichnungen," *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* (1954–59): 234–47. The connection between Palermo's and Runge's interest in the times of day was first made by Schwenk, who argued that Palermo was interested in suggesting a general metaphysical experience of time in Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 90ff. See also Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 130–31, 139–41; Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 110–11; and, most extensively, Thomas Lange, "Licht, Farbe, Entfernungen. Über Palermo. Runge und die Orientierung an der Durchlässigkeit von 'Bild' und 'Welt,'" in *Blinky Palermo. Eine Tagung*, 31–47.

69. Schwenk argues that the measurements of the work provide a clue for a system based on the passing and measuring of time: the width of 52 centimeters of each panel, for example, stands for the number of weeks per year; see Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 90–91.

70. Gerhard Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 5. This translation from the German is taken from Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 120.

71. *Wvz* 191–93.

72. I agree with Susanne Küper that Palermo's wall painting for the Kunstverein in Hamburg was probably not intended to be his last one but was in part the result of his move to New York City. However, I do think that the later installations were a decisive turn in Palermo's work, one that may have formed into a new, fifth work group had he lived longer; see Küper, "Palermo," 86.

73. The doorways in the photographs are consistent with the ones marked on the ground plan in *La Biennale di Venezia 1976: Ambiente, partecipazione, strutture culturali*, ed. Barbara Radice and Franco Raggi, exh. cat. (Venice: Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia, 1976), 1:188. My on-site visit and Google Earth imagery of the building showed that the ground plan is reproduced with the northeast oriented at the top, thus producing the color layout I describe. Susanne Küper posits the same orientations based on the on-site examination by the late Michel Majerus; see Küper, "Palermo," 548.

74. See Küper's descriptions in Küper, "Palermo," 537–38; Palermo, Letter to Uwe Kiessler, 27 April 1976, Archive Kiessler + Partner, Munich. My thanks to Mr. Kiessler for making available Palermo's letter. There is an additional drawing of the four elements and a brochure documenting the building entitled "Bayerische Rück" in the Palermo Files; Bestand Six Friedrich, A14, XIII, 2–3, Zentralarchiv des Internationalen Kunsthandels.

75. Palermo, Letter to Uwe Kiessler, 27 April 1976.

76. Ibid.

77. It seems unlikely that Palermo would have seen any of these. Judd's first large-scale box series was the one he made for his January 1969 show at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, and it remained in his possession. An untitled work with angled interior planes was made in 1977, but Palermo died in February of that year. Palermo had devised plans for another installation that would be even more architectural than the ones in Munich and Venice for the library at the University in Freiburg, entitled *Tageszeiten* (Times of Day). That work involved four ten-meter-long steel poles to be installed on the exterior facade of the building, also under construction. "1 stands for morning, 2 for noon, 3 for afternoon, four for evening + night," Palermo wrote on his sketch for the project, *Wvz* 579. Despite Küper's extensive research of that project, it seems to me we know too little about it and Palermo did not have it developed far enough to draw any conclusions; see Küper, "Palermo," 534–35; Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 68 and 24n100.

78. In describing his mode of working and the nature of his objects, Judd distinguishes between a rational mode of working (the relational balancing and ordering of parts), which he rejects, and the use of logic (the preconception of the work), which he supports. See Glaser, "Questions to Stella and Judd," in *Minimal Art*, ed. Battcock, 151.

79. The classic text on the concept of dematerialization is Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* 12 (February 1968): 31–36.

80. Conceptual artists who insisted on this visual engagement of the mind showed their work at Galerie Konrad Fischer, including Sol Le Witt in 1968 and 1969, Hanne Darboven in 1967 and 1968, and Mel Bochner in 1969; see *Ausstellungen bei Konrad Fischer*. Compare the related distinctions Rosalind Krauss makes between conceptual art that through its stress on a priori ideas is founded on intentionality, an idealist consciousness, and private meanings, and postminimalist art that through its stress on nonhierarchical modes of working focuses on unstable perceptual and bodily experiences and a public meaning; see Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflections on Post-60s Sculpture," *Artforum* 12 (November 1973): 43–53.

81. Peter Schjeldahl, "Minimalism" (1984), reprinted in *The Hydrogen Jukebox: Selected Writings of Peter Schjeldahl, 1978–1990*, ed. Malin Wilson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 223. As a solution Schjeldahl proposed that "we badly need a full account of minimalism from a European perspective" (210), one that I would argue Palermo provided.

82. Gary Garrels, "Technical Notes and Schematic Outline," in *Blinky Palermo* (1976), 26. The cycle was exhibited as a finished work at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in New York in May and June 1977 and in various other contexts thereafter, most importantly at the Dia Art Foundation in New York from October 1987 to June 1989. It is now on permanent display at Dia: Beacon, in Beacon, New York. For a complete listing up to 1995, see Katharina Schmidt, "'Was man mit Bildern erreichen kann.' Zu Palermos *To the People of New York City*," in *To the People of New York City*, 43. The work was found partially installed and two panels do not conform to the serial substructures of the rest of the work (*Wvz* 199 VI and 199 XV), so it is possible that he signed the panels and dated them to 1976 but intended to add more. Thordis Moeller recalls that he considered the work finished; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 21 June 2008.

83. Gottschaller concluded that it remains unclear whether Palermo wanted to stay for good or eventually meant to return to New York City; see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 25n103. A letter from Helen Winkler of the Galerie Friedrich in New York to the Munich branch early that year implies that Palermo was happy at that time and reveals no plans for him to move back to Germany. She writes that Palermo "paints in the back apartment, is getting a new glorious place, is in a good mood, and his paintings still make our big space very happy" (Winkler, Letter to Galerie Friedrich Munich, 9 January 1976, Palermo Files, Bestand Six Friedrich, A47, V, 1, 32).

84. *Wvz* 199 I–XV.

85. *Wvz* 184–86, 195–96, 201.

86. Storr, "Beuys's Boys," 167.

87. Palermo's sketches show the hanging order he intended for the piece, which was found only partially installed in his studio after his death. See *Wvz* 480 and 483 I–XV. He also wrote hanging instructions on the verso of the panels. See the comments in the *Werkverzeichnis* for *Wvz* 199 I–XV. Babett Scobel, then Polter, believes that the work was not hung in correct order at the 1987 Dia installation. See her remarks in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 44–45.

88. Klaus Staeck reports that Palermo saw Beuys when he came to New York; Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 33–34. On Beuys's performance, see Uwe M. Schneede, *Joseph*

Beuys. Die Aktionen (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1994), 330–53; John Perreault, "Beuys and Coyote: An Eerie Duet," *Village Voice* (6 June 1974).

89. Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 85–86.

90. That this was an intimate gesture is perhaps also suggested by the lower-case spelling and the abbreviation of "N.Y.C." The *Werkverzeichnis* gives the title *To the People of New York City* (*Wvz* 199). Pia Gottschaller referenced the work as *To the People of N.Y.C.*, retaining the abbreviation "N.Y.C." but changing the capitalization to title style, in Gottschaller, *Palermo*. According to the *Werkverzeichnis* documentation of Palermo's writing on the verso of the panels of the work, Palermo wrote the title as "to the people of N.Y.C" in *Wvz* 199 I, II, III, IV, V; and as "to the people of N.Y.C." in *Wvz* 199 VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV. The inscription on the drawing *Entwurf zu "To the People of New York City"* (Sketch for "To the People of New York City"; *Wvz* 480) notes the title in lower case and "New York City" written out. The untitled sketch reproduced here (see fig. 124) is inscribed "to the people of N.Y.C." Each of the fifteen drawings of the series *Entwurf zu "To the People of N.Y.C."* (Sketch for "To the People of N.Y.C."; *Wvz* 483 I–XV) notes the title in lower case and the city name abbreviated.

91. Küper reports Dahlem's memories of Beuys's reaction in Küper, "Palermo," 548. Dahlem later described the colors of *to the people of N.Y.C.* as black, red, and gold, rather than yellow; see Dahlem, "Neuland ist das Territorium der Kunst," in *Blinky Palermo, 1943–1977*, 16. For references to the German national colors in the context of *to the people of N.Y.C.*, see Tatransky, "Blinky Palermo" (1977), 32; Lauf, "Beuys, Knoebel and Palermo," 73; Katharina Schmidt, "'Was man mit Bildern erreichen kann,'" 37; and Rein, "Wer kennt den Anfang, wer das Ende?" See also Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 121–22. Following the semirevolutionary use of black, red, and gold by the German *Burschenschaften* (fraternities) in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, the German Parliament proclaimed them the national colors in 1848.

92. Palermo to a friend as relayed by Thordis Moeller, Conversation with the author, 21 July 2007. The press release is in the artist file in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. White, yellow, black, and red also played a central role in medieval alchemy, but I have not found any evidence that Palermo knew or was interested in this; see Delamare and Guineau, *Colors*, 144.

93. See "Gestorben. Palermo." Dierk Stemmler's argument that the colors are consistent more specifically with the Cheyenne color system does not hold because he was basing it on incorrect information about the locations of the colors: Stemmler assumed that black was in the north, white in the east, red in the south, and yellow in the west; see Stemmler, "Zu dieser Ausstellung," 116. See my reconstruction of the actual layout, above.

94. Palermo referenced Native American culture as early as 1960 with his watercolor *Indianerin (Native American)*; the untitled staff object of 1964–67 (fig. 36), which was entitled *Totem* in Palermo's catalogue for the object exhibition in Mönchengladbach, may also have been a reference; see *Palermo. Objekte*, n.p.

95. Gladys A. Reichard, *Navajo Medicine Man Sandpaintings* (1939; New York: Dover, 1977), 27, 57. Palermo gave the book to Carmen Knoebel, the wife of his friend Imi; Carmen Knoebel as relayed by Thordis Moeller in a phone conversation with the author, 24 September 2007.

96. Imi Knoebel as relayed by Moeller in a phone conversation with the author, 24 September 2007.

97. I might highlight here John G. Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks*, which was reissued in 1972 and was extremely popular; Cecile Ganteaume, associate curator, Museum of the American Indian, Email to the author's research assistant Sydney Skelton, 19 July 2007. On page 2, it says, "So, I fill this sacred pipe with the bark of the red willow; but before we smoke it, you must see how it is made and what it means. These four ribbons hanging here on the stem are the four quarters of the universe. The black one is for the west where the thunder beings live to send us rain; the white one for the north, whence comes the great white cleansing wind; the red one for the east, whence springs the light and where the morning star lives to give men wisdom; the yellow for the south, whence come the summer and the power to grow" (Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* [1932; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004]).

98. Kristin Heisterkamp, quoted in Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 22; Knoebel, quoted in Küper, "Palermo," 547n3. Palermo and Knoebel's attempt to see the museum was probably in July 1974, and the museum generally closed in the summer months because of a shortage of staff; Mary Jane Lenz, curator, Museum of the American Indian, Conversation with Sydney Skelton, 19 July 2007. I would like to thank

Sydney for conducting substantial research on the museum and its collections.

99. The museum back then was still named after George Gustav Heye, who assembled the basis of the collection. On the early history of the museum, see *The History of the Museum*, Indian Notes and Monographs No. 55 (New York: Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation, 1956); *Indianer Nordamerikas. Schätze des Museum of American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York*, ed. Ingeborg Bolz, exh. cat. (Cologne: Kunsthalle Köln, 1969), 9ff. I would like to thank Aldona Jonaitis, director of the University of Alaska Museum of the North, for generously helping me solve this puzzle and facilitating my research into Palermo's interest in Native American art.

100. Barnett Newman, "The Ideographic Picture" (1948), in *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O'Neill (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), 106–7. Roy Lichtenstein was another American contemporary artist who took great interest in Native American art; see Gail Stavitsky and Twig Johnson, *Roy Lichtenstein, American Indian Encounters*, exh. cat. (Montclair: Montclair Art Museum, 2006).

Frederick Dockstader of the Museum of the American Indian noted with regret in a catalogue for a German exhibition of the collection in 1969 that "the Indian is a master of abstraction, yet the abstract art of the Northwest coast and of the Southwest has inspired modern art only little" (*Indianer Nordamerikas*, 24). It is possible that Palermo saw this exhibition or catalogue.

101. The photographs were taken in the 1980s, but the cases had remained unchanged since the 1950s and 1960s; Ganteaume, Conversation with Skelton, 19 July 2007. The most striking photographs in addition to the one reproduced here are Tno 40, 41, 53, 71, 75, and 79, all located in the Photo Archives, Cultural Resource Center, at the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C. The archive does not include the wall texts that Palermo may have read, and they are not legible in the photographs. The exhibition brochure available to visitors at the time contains color photographs of the cases and some text, but none discusses color choices or symbolism. The brochure was made in 1964 but was still available in 1974; Lenz, Conversation with Skelton, 19 July 2007.

Gottschaller reports that a crystal skull from South America particularly impressed Palermo at the Museum of the American Indian; Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 22. The loaned object was the highlight of the exhibition *Visions of Mortality: The Skull Motif in Indian Art* on view from 2 November 1972 to 31 March 1973. Based on the photographs in the archive (OC195 row 12 [1743]) and the exhibition leaflet, it seems that the object, which produces an intense play of light, struck a chord with Palermo because of his interest in light at the time. See Frederick J. Dockstader, *Visions of Mortality: The Skull Motif in Indian Art*, exh. leaflet (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1972).

The timing of Palermo's move to New York in late 1973 makes it likely that he would have also seen much of the collection of the Museum of the American Indian as it was on view from 18 October to 31 December 1973 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in *Masterworks from the Museum of the American Indian*, an exhibition organized by Frederick Dockstader with approximately two hundred objects; see Dockstader, *Masterworks from the Museum of the American Indian* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973), and, for the catalogue of the traveling version of the exhibition, on sale already at the Metropolitan venue, Dockstader, *Indian Art of the Americas*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1973). Information about the exhibition was gathered from the exhibition files in the archive of the National Museum of the American Indian.

102. The Cologne show was up from 1 July to 1 October 1969 and organized by Ingeborg Bolz-Auenstein from the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum der Stadt Köln in cooperation with Frederick Dockstader from the Museum of the American Indian. For the catalogue, see *Indianer Nordamerikas*. In addition, Palermo may have learned about Native American art long before his first trips to New York through his artist acquaintance Horst Antes, who collected Native American feather works; Thordis Moeller, Conversation with the author, 24 September 2007. For Antes's collection, see *Federarbeiten der Indianer Südamerikas aus der Studiensammlung Horst Antes*, ed. Gisela Völger and Ursula Dyckerhoff (Cologne: Oktagon, 1994).

103. Widow of Jan Zumbrink as relayed by Moeller in a phone conversation with the author, 24 September 2007.

Chapter 5. Collaborations with Gerhard Richter, 1970–1971

1. Richter, quoted in Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler* (Cologne: DuMont, 2002), 226. Elger dates the encounter to February 1963, which if correct is surprising since by that point Palermo had made very little work that was heavily influenced by Goller. Richter considered it "a great stroke of luck that I met Polke and Lueg, and a little later Palermo" (140). Elger's book provides much new insight into Richter's work and thinking throughout his career, particularly with respect to the period covered in this chapter. It is based on intimate knowledge of Richter's personal archive and on extensive conversations with Richter.

2. Analyses of collaborations beyond the realm of the visual arts have shown that they often occur between young, rebellious creative individuals of equal status involving activities with little commitment; see Michael P. Farrell, *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 14.

3. Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 227. Richter has also been quoted as saying that "of course we were really strangers to one another [natürlich waren wir uns eigentlich fremd], but we always judged things the same way." This widely quoted statement first appeared in *Gerhard Richter. Bilder, 1962–1985*, essay by Jürgen Harten, exh. cat. (Cologne: DuMont, and Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle, 1986), 49. Harten references the 1980 Palermo exhibition catalogue from the Galerie-Verein München, but I have been unable to locate the quotation there. See also Harten's assessment of Palermo and Richter's collaborations: "They worked together as if to demonstrate that difference is only the expression of a relation in which one has unlearned how to connect its opposing parts. While the mute intensity of one wanted to move from material to painting, the risky intelligence of the other aimed for the abstract in and beyond pictorial illusion" (50).

4. Sustained collaborations between painters are especially rare in the modern era—exceptions being the "jam sessions" of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland and the collaborative canvases of Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat (and Francesco Clemente). For a survey of collaborations in twentieth-century art see Cynthia Jaffee McCabe, *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984). For contemporary collaborations, see *Get Together. Kunst als Teamwork*, exh. cat. (Vienna: Kunsthalle Wien, 1999). See also the recent book by Joachim Pissarro, *Cézanne/Pissarro, Johns/Rauschenberg: The Aesthetics of Collaboration in Modern Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

5. Rorimer, "Palermo: Objects," 35.

6. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, trans. Judith Ryan, in *Goethe: The Collected Works*, ed. David E. Wellbery (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11:114. For the original German, see Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, in *Goethes Werke. Band 6: Romane und Novellen I*, ed. Erich Trunz (Munich: Beck, 1981), 273.

7. Palermo's previous work was most directly engaged with Beuys through the staff element, as discussed in Chapter 1. On the date of Palermo's first cloth picture, see Chapter 2, note 1, above.

8. Richter, Conversation with David Reed, May 2005. Reed's notes in personal papers of David Reed, New York.

9. Richter, quoted in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 76. Palermo had probably never been to Richter's house until after the Creamcheese bar opened on 20 July 1967, since that is where Ema Richter remembers meeting Palermo; Ema Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 109.

10. See Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 147–51. Richter had had his first one-man exhibitions in 1964 at Galerie Friedrich + Dahlem and at Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf. His turn to a more direct acknowledgment of personal matters seems to coincide with his interest in abstract painting and his association with Palermo. A rebellious answer to Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) and Duchamp's rejection of painting, Richter's *Ema: Akt auf einer Treppe* declared his commitment to serious painting. Richter's wife descends the staircase leading into his studio; personal, intimate issues enter painting destined for a public. The stairs can be clearly identified in the photograph included in the two versions of the editioned photograph *Kugelobjekt* (Sphere Object) of 1970. See Ema Richter, quoted in Helga Meister, "Der Maler Gerhard Richter," *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten* (1 February 2006). See also the description in Marlis Grüterich, "Gerhard Richters Phänomenologie der Illusion—eine gemalte Aesthetik gegen die reine Malerei," in *Gerhard Richter. Bilder aus den Jahren 1962–1974*, exh. cat. (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen, 1975), 56; Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "*Ema* (1966) oder ein Akt in der Neoavantgarde," in *Gerhard Richter. Band 2: Texte*, 19–27. Richter had made abstract paintings before 1966 in the vein of Informel and signal art but had destroyed most of them and did not include them in his catalogue raisonné. See the memories of his teacher, K. O. Götz, *Erinnerungen und Werk*, Band 1b (Düsseldorf: Concept Verlag, 1983), 91–92; Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 48–49.

11. *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting, Writings and Interviews, 1962–1993*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, trans.

David Britt (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 141; translation slightly modified based on the original German in *Gerhard Richter, Text. Schriften und Interviews*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1993), 131. While Richter maintains that Palermo helped him decide to paint abstractly, he "would not go so far as to say he would have never painted abstractly without him" (Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007). Armin Zweite has recently suggested that Palermo's *Flipper* played a role in Richter's conception of the color charts. Indeed, *Flipper*, like the color charts, originated from a found motif transferred onto canvas, but its found nature is much less apparent than that of the motifs in the color charts and cloth pictures, and it does not make color a central concern, as in the color charts and cloth pictures; see Zweite, "Sehen, Reflektieren, Erscheinen. Anmerkungen zum Werk von Gerhard Richter," in *Gerhard Richter* (Düsseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2005), 51.

12. Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 72–73, and in *Gerhard Richter. Aquarelle, 1964–1997*, ed. Dieter Schwarz, trans. David Galloway (Düsseldorf: Richter, 1999), 21.

13. Richter's first color charts were made sometime between May and October 1966. If the chronology is as strict as the *Werkübersicht* claims, Richter would have started the color charts closer to the later date; see *Gerhard Richter*, Band 3: *Werkübersicht, 1962–1993*, essays by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Peter Gidal, and Birgit Pelzer, exh. cat. (Bonn: Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1993), 146; henceforth referred to as *Werkübersicht* and followed by the illustration number where applicable. Richter today does not remember whether his color charts were made before or after Palermo's first cloth pictures; Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007.

14. Richter, like Palermo, pursued the subtle differences between vertically and horizontally divided paintings in a vertically divided color chart of 1966; see *Werkübersicht* 143-1.

15. Richter in an interview with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, in *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 141, translation slightly modified based on the German in *Richter, Text*, 131; Richter quoted in Klaus Honnef, "Schwierigkeiten beim Beschreiben der Realität. Richters Malerei zwischen Kunst und Wirklichkeit," in *Gerhard Richter* (Aachen: Gegenverkehr, Zentrum für Aktuelle Kunst, 1969), n.p. Gerhard Storck also distinguishes between Richter's pop-oriented color chart paintings and Palermo's more serious concerns in Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 17. On color as ready made in Richter's work, see Hubertus Butin, "Gerhard Richter und die Reflexion der Bilder," in *Gerhard Richter Editionen, 1965–2004, Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. Hubertus Butin and Stefan Gronert (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 2004), 27–32.

16. For Palermo's cloth picture see *Palermo. Werkverzeichnis*, Band 1, ill. 58; henceforth illustrations will be referred to by *Wvz* and the illustration number. For the gallery's exclusion from the fair and a reproduction of the verso of the portrait with the signatures, see my "Emerging Market: On the Birth of the Contemporary Art Fair," *Artforum* (April 2008): 327, 329. Richter today speculates that the folding of the color chart perhaps resulted from space constraints but also sees it resonating with the object-like character and folded nature of the commercial color charts that inspired him. Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007. Richter described and assessed the making of the panel as reported to me by his assistant in Konstanze Ell, Email to the author, 6 March 2008. The portrait panel today is in the collection of Friedrich Moeller, New York.

17. For the position of the color charts in Richter's oeuvre, see *Werkübersicht*, 135-1 through 144-10, 300-1 through 301-20.

18. On the crisis embodied by the monochromes, discussed below, see Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 195–96.

19. Compare the account of Jürgen Wesseler from the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst in Küper, "Palermo," 476. For the print, see *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, 58–59. Palermo also used a color sample as the motif for a print relating to his wall painting at the Hamburger Kunstverein; see *Palermo. Die gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, 78–79.

20. Richter in *Gerhard Richter. Aquarelle*, 21. Richter confirmed he owned the works discussed here but is not entirely sure whether he owned additional ones, nor does he remember which ones Palermo owned. Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007. I have been unable to determine what the second watercolor may have been; Richter may have had in mind *Greensleeves II*, which was given to Ema Richter. I have also been unable to determine all the works by Richter that Palermo owned, but he did own the gray monochrome discussed later (see note 29). Palermo also lent work to Richter's 1971 retrospective; see the list of lenders in *Gerhard Richter. Arbeiten, 1962 bis 1971*, ed. Karl-Heinz Hering, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, 1971). On *Komposition mit 5 Linien* and the Galerie Schmela exhibition, see Chapter 1, note 31, above. If this is indeed the work that was shown, Richter would have received it after the exhibition closed since it was still on sale there (and remained unsold). The drawing measures 13.3 by 10.6 centimeters and is mounted on white board measuring 50 by 10.6 centimeters.

21. According to Thordis Moeller, *Greensleeves I* was owned by Palermo's first wife, Ingrid Kohlhöfer, following their divorce; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 17 May 2006.

22. "My wife Ema sewed him the cloth pictures. That's how we got a Palermo" (Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 73). Ema Richter explained that this was not a cloth picture, as I had initially assumed, but *Greensleeves II* (1966); Ema Richter, Conversation with the author, Düsseldorf, 15 November 2007.

23. Richter to Ann Temkin, 3 February 2006, relayed by Ann Temkin, Conversation with the author, 3 March 2006. See also *Gerhard Richter. Bilder*, essay by Harten, 37; Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 185.

24. On Palermo's crisis, see Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 7, 26–28.

25. Gerhard Richter, Email to the author, 23 March 2006. The inventory card in the object files in the collection of Herzog Franz von Bayern notes that "the picture was painted by Richter, who then grew unsure, but upon instigation by Palermo did not destroy it. For that he dedicated the painting to Palermo." The quotation is not attributed to anyone but is probably by Fred Jahn, who owned the painting until 1984. In the eighties, Richter occasionally entitled abstract paintings with the names of friends; Dietmar Elger, Email to the author, 20 March 2006.

26. For Richter as the witness to Palermo's second wedding, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 20. Thordis Moeller suggested that Richter's *9 Objekte* (9 Objects) dating from 1969 might refer to Palermo's objects; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 14 March 2006.

27. Richter, Interview with Robert Storr, in Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 59; Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 73.

28. Richter in *Gerhard Richter. Bilder*, essay by Harten, 43.

29. Maximilian Krips, Email to the author, 28 March 2006. Since this 1968 painting was not included in Richter's *Werkübersicht*, Richter, according to Krips, retroactively numbered the painting 194-24. Richter is fairly sure that he received the cloth picture from Palermo as part of a trade, but he does not remember what he gave Palermo. Richter. Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007.

30. See Küper, "Palermo," 50, 311. Küper may have dated the photograph incorrectly to 1971; the painting on which Richter is still at work in this photograph dates from 1970. In addition, by 1971 Richter had moved to a different studio, in Harkortstrasse; see Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 225.

31. See Chapter 2, note 102, above, for details about the kit.

32. On Palermo's concern with the place of decoration, see Chapter 3.

33. See Küper, "Palermo," 489.

34. Richter also traded works with other artists, for example Heinz Mack; see *Werkübersicht* 110-1.

35. Rückriem in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 88–89. Thordis Moeller remembers Rückriem and Palermo collaborating "as a joke" on a design for the book cover of the Mönchengladbach city budget; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 16 May 2006.

36. Polke's portrait is reproduced in *Palermo. Werke, 1963–1977*, 148. Martin Hentschel described the portrait as "three lines giving a physiognomic, slightly sullen expression" (Hentschel, "Die Ordnung des Heterogenen: Sigmar Polkes Werk bis 1986" [Ph.D. diss., Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 1991], 313–14). Hentschel reads the drawing as articulating the artistic differences between Polke and Palermo in light of the latter's interest in geometric abstraction. Compare Margit Rowell's suggestion about Palermo's reference to Polke in his *Television V* (1970); Rowell, *Sigmar Polke: Works on Paper, 1963–1974* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 26. For the *mit, neben, gegen* exhibition, see *Mit—Neben—Gegen. 3 Tage Frankfurter Kunstverein*, ed. Gerresheimer Berichte (Oldenburg, 1976). The other works named above are *Wvz* 44, 180, 282, 299, 390, 424, 465, 471.

37. Imi Knoebel, from a 1982 conversation with Johannes Stüttgen, reprinted with revisions in Martin Schulz, *Imi Knoebel. Die Tradition des gegenstandslosen Bildes* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 1998), 164. Knoebel notes that color was Palermo's "thing" and that he himself began to use colors only after Palermo's death, in the cycle *24 Farben—Für Blinky* (161, 164). Knoebel also describes setting out with Palermo to search for a very specific green in paint supply stores but, not finding it, notes that he asked Palermo for permission to use his Bleimennige because its freshness and intensity fascinated him (161–62). One of the exhibition invitations is in the Palermo Archive in Millerton, N.Y.

38. Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 74.

39. Petra Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen. Die Schüler von Joseph Beuys* (Düsseldorf: Richter, 2000), 161ff.

40. For a photograph of Knoebel helping Palermo install his work in Mönchengladbach, see *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 23. On Palermo's sharing a studio with Knoebel, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 20.

41. See Knoebel in Schulz, *Imi Knoebel*, 147; *Richter, Text*, 99, 147, 286. On the *Raum 19* installation, see Hubertus Gassner, "Imi Knoebel—Raum 19," in *Deutschlandbilder*, 289–92.

42. See Küper, "Palermo," 439–40. Revised versions were made by Knoebel in 1986 and 2002; see *Imi gegen groben Schmutz*, ed. Karola Grässlin (Cologne: König, 2003), 54, 58.

43. Klaus Gallwitz, "Foreword," in *Gruppenarbeiten 1971*.

44. Others are worth mentioning briefly because they are little known. As early as 1955 and while still living in East Germany, Richter had collaborated with two artist friends, Joachim Jastram and Alfred Thomalla, on trick photographs with the three of them as subjects; see Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 22–23. In 1968 Richter and his studio neighbor Günther Uecker staged a little-known performance at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden entitled *Leben im Museum* (Living in the Museum), in which the two used the exhibition space as their studio for the duration of the show, staging occasional playful, anarchic actions and dressed in bathrobe and pajamas (168). These and other collaborations are the subject of my essay in an anthology on Gerhard Richter forthcoming from Getty Publications and co-edited by myself, Jeanne Nugent, and Jon Seydl.

45. Rolf-Gunter Dienst, *Pop Art. Eine kritische Information* (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1965), 138. The program for the event was first reprinted in *Grafik des Kapitalistischen Realismus*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Galerie René Block, 1971), 31–35. See Susanne Küper's important essay "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter. 'Leben mit Pop—Eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus,'" *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 53 (1992): 289–306. Richter's collaborations with Lueg came to an end after their unrealized attempt to juxtapose photographs of Nazi concentration camps with cheap porn for the exhibition *Sex und Massenmord* (Sex and Mass Murder) at the Galerie Niepel in Düsseldorf in 1966; see Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 137–38. Some of these materials are included in Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*, ed. Helmut Friedel (Cologne: Walther König, 2006), ills. 16–22.

46. *Gerhard Richter Editionen*, ills. 3, 12, 14; Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 130ff. The UFO photograph is reproduced as *Ufo, fotografiert mit Polke am 26.4.68* in *Gerhard Richter* (Aachen: Gegenverkehr, 1969), n.p. In 1970, Richter also made four double-exposure portraits of himself and Polke; see *Atlas*, ill. 61. For Richter's relationship and collaborations with Polke, see also Hubertus Butin's essays "Gerhard Richter und die Reflexion der Bilder" and "Gerhard Richter und Sigmar Polke. Eine Künstlerfreundschaft als mikrosoziales System" in *Legitimationen: Künstlerinnen und Künstler als Autoritäten der Gegenwartskunst*, ed. Julia Gelshorn (Bern: Lang, 2005).

47. *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 256. In 1964 Richter jotted down notes about capitalist realism: "Contact with like-minded painters—a group means a great deal to me: nothing comes in isolation. We have worked out our ideas largely by talking them through. . . . One depends on one's surroundings. And so the exchange with other artists—and especially with Lueg and Polke—matters a lot to me: it is part of the input I need" (24).

48. Richter in Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 141.

49. Ibid., 230. For the hanging plan showing the proximity to the collaborative painting *Fingerspuren*, see the fold-out ground plans in Hering, *Gerhard Richter: Arbeiten*. Richter did not realize at the time that Polke might have been hurt by Palermo's having replaced him, as it were, but he is surprised today that he did not understand the dynamic. Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007.

50. Block, introduction to *Grafik des Kapitalistischen Realismus*, 30. For the portfolio and silkscreen see *Gerhard Richter Editionen*, ills. 12, 36.

51. *Palermo*, exh. brochure. See also Palermo's inscription on the drawing in the Deutsche Bank collection, *Wvz* 527.

52. Quoted in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," *October* 42 (Fall 1987): 82. Both Palermo and Richter probably knew Broodthaers at this point. Several photographs dating from 1969 show Palermo visiting Broodthaers's garden with a wall bearing the inscription *Département des Aigles; Blinky Palermo, 1964–1976*, n.p. Richter answered a request by Broodthaers to contribute a painting to the presentation of *Département des Aigles* in Düsseldorf in 1970; *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 157–58, 239; Storr, *Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, 61.

53. Küper, “Palermo,” 335.

54. Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 225–26. Elger also reports Richter’s impression that Lueg had felt that his work was inferior to Richter’s in the early sixties and that he took this out on Richter after he had grown more powerful as a dealer. Richter recalls that at the dinner for the Carl Andre exhibition that opened the gallery, he and Palermo were not invited to sit at the main table with the artist (193).

55. For complete documentation of Gilbert and George’s performances, see *Gilbert and George*, essay by Carter Ratcliff, exh. cat. (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1980), 315–16. For coverage of the Friedrich performance, see “Gilbert und George: Glückliche Hauer,” *Der Spiegel* (2 November 1970). There is no connection between the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle performance and the solo exhibition in the fall of the following year at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf.

56. *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 262.

57. *Gerhard Richter. Bilder*, essay by Harten, 49. Harten also reports that Richter made double exposure photographs of himself and Polke, but these were never published.

58. This is based on the recollections of Herbert Nolte, who attended Palermo’s opening and went with him to the singing sculpture performance the next evening. Nolte dates the encounter to roughly 1968, but the dates for Gilbert and George’s performance and Palermo’s opening are undoubtedly 1970. He also recalls Beuys being present at the performance, “standing in front of them, beaming.” Nolte was not involved with the art world, and these events made a distinct impression on him; Nolte, Interview about Palermo.

59. Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 20; Küper, “Palermo,” 388; *Blinky Palermo* (1993), 229; Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 225.

60. From the setting, I would date these photographs to mid-1970. That dating is approximate and based on the assumption that the paintings had just been or were about to be completed and on their dates according to the *Werkübersicht* for 1970. For *Wolke*, see *Werkübersicht* 270-3.

61. Richter assessed the status of the photographs in a conversation with Thordis Moeller; Moeller, Conversation with the author, 14 March 2006.

62. Richter in Marcovicz, *“To the People . . . ,”* 77. The painting was exhibited in Richter’s retrospective in 1971; see Hering, *Gerhard Richter. Arbeiten*. Richter today recalls that “nitro solvent [*Nitrolösung*] destroyed the paint” and that “oil spots [*Ölflecken*] emerged from the surface” (Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007).

63. Friedrich von Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 34. For the original German, see Friedrich von Schlegel and August Wilhelm Schlegel, “Fragmente,” *Athenaeum* 1, no. 2 (1798): 33.

64. Richter in Marcovicz, *“To the People . . . ,”* 76, and *Gerhard Richter. Aquarelle*, 21. Talking about his watercolors with Dieter Schwarz, Richter disagreed with the curator’s impression that Palermo’s were more “processual” and Richter’s “more naturally pictorial,” thinking instead of his own as “more confused and naturally more illusionistic than those of Palermo” (*Gerhard Richter. Aquarelle*, 21). Throughout this book, I argue that Palermo’s process was more precise than most critics have believed. Palermo created with great care: his cloth pictures, for example, were sewn by Ema Richter because she was a trained seamstress, while his wall paintings were created with techniques like taping and snapping a chalk line to produce relatively clean edges and lines.

65. See Klaus Honnef, *Gerhard Richter* (Recklinghausen: Bongers, 1976), 41. Honnef most likely refers to *Grauschlieren* (Gray Striations), *Werkübersicht* 192-1. Several other works thereafter were or seem to be painted with fingers, including the editioned painting *Vermalung (grau)* (commonly translated as Inpainting but also meaning Mispainting) of 1971; see *Gerhard Richter Editionen*, ill. 45.

66. The proposals have never been discussed. They are mentioned in passing in *Gerhard Richter. Bilder*, essay by Harten, 33, and Helmut Friedel, “Transformations, Camouflage and Land Art: On the History and Topography for the 1972 Summer Olympics and for the BMW Headquarters (1973) in Munich Where Richter’s Paintings, Red/Yellow/Blue, Found Their Place,” in Friedel, *Gerhard Richter. Red/Yellow/Blue, the BMW Paintings*, with a contribution by Robert Storr (Munich: Prestel, 2007), 118–25, and described briefly in Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 230–31, and Zweite, “Sehen, Reflektieren, Erscheinen,” 74.

67. *Bauten der Olympischen Spiele 1972 München* (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer, 1969), 2. This is quoted from the English translation included in the catalogue, for which no translator is identified. See also Egon Dheus, *Die Olympiastadt München. Entwicklung und Struktur* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972), 154.

68. Thordis Moeller, Conversation with the author, 18

February 2006. Heiner Friedrich had connections to Behnisch and Partner (architects for the new Olympic buildings), as confirmed by Moeller and by Christian Kandzia from the office of Behnisch and Partner; Kandzia, Letter to the author, 22 March 2006. Andre's proposal is reproduced in Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts, 1959–2004*, ed. James Meyer (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 187. Asked by Tiffany Bell "why . . . the project for the 1972 Olympics [did] not pan out," Flavin answered: "I felt that the interest was never there. When the nationalistic interests finally obtained, the Americans were easily forgotten" ("Dan Flavin Interviewed by Tiffany Bell" [1982], in Michael Govan and Tiffany Bell, *Dan Flavin* [Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2004], 197). For De Maria, see, for example, *Walter De Maria Skulpturen*, exh. cat. (Basel: Kunstmuseum, 1972).

69. Dheus, *Die Olympiastadt München*, x; *Bauten für Olympia '72*, ed. Carl Heinz Harbeke (Munich: Harbeke, 1972), 10; Martin Wimmer, *Olympic Buildings*, trans. Herbert Liebscher (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1976), 70.

70. Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 231; Kandzia, Letter to the author, 22 March 2006; Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007. Judging from the final building design, the stripes were probably also intended to be made from dyed glass. For the buildings, see Harbeke, *Bauten für Olympia '72*, 9, 90–115. The Schwimmhalle was remodeled after the Games were over; the stands were removed and the glass wall was extended all around to accommodate an indoor-outdoor swimming pool. Richter's 2007 window design in the Cologne Dom revolves around the same idea. It contains 11,500 colored squares made of antique glass, measuring 9.4 square centimeters and dyed in 72 different colors, which were installed in the south wing of the church.

71. Konstanze Ell, Richter's assistant, Letter to the author, 22 May 2007. Kandzia remembers that the projection was meant for a ninety-four-meters-long wall and that the motif was an African landscape, while Fred Jahn remembers that Richter proposed a landscape showing the Alps on the windows; Kandzia, Letter to the author, 22 March 2006; Fred Jahn as reported by Thordis Moeller in conversation with the author, 20 March 2006. Kandzia elaborated: "As a motif, an African landscape was to be photographed, which Richter was supposed to defamiliarize. The project had advanced very far, there even was a lighting model [*Beleuchtungsmuster*] on a 1:1 scale." Kandzia further explained that the project was dropped because of changes in the costs after Richter changed the length of time that he would guarantee the preservation of the cibachrome-slide. A collage that probably relates to this project is in the Richter Files, Bestand Six Friedrich, A47, VIII, 11. The inscription on the back reads, "Sketch for a Photo Work, which R. wanted to cover with colored glass. Information from Hubertus Butin, who spoke with Richter on September 14. Made 1971."

72. Palermo's *Entwurf für ein Fenster* is not illustrated in the *Werkverzeichnis* and consists of two parts: a brown foam-rubber sheet set behind a vertical frame with a central cross bar painted bright yellow and a length of the same foam rubber rolled up on a wooden bar and installed over the frame like a curtain. A reproduction is in the Palermo Archive. The wall painting for the 1969 exhibition *Düsseldorfer Szene* at the Kunstmuseum Luzern entitled *6 Fenster nach innen* in its original conception involved six square outlines that suggested windows into the wall; however, *6 Fenster nach innen* is not part of Palermo's own documentation of the wall paintings. For a description and relevant documents, see Küper, "Palermo," 286ff; see also the discussion of the motif of the window in Palermo's wall paintings on pages 111ff. Richter's 1967 *4 Glasscheiben* are set into iron frames and swing around a central axis on five floor-to-ceiling iron rods; see *Werkübersicht* 160.

73. *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 64. See also *Gerhard Richter. Bilder*, essay by Harten, 33.

74. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Eight Gray:* Between *Vorschein* and *Glanz*," in *Gerhard Richter: Eight Gray*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2002).

75. For the architects' description, see Behnisch and Partner, "Olympic Athletic Facilities, Munich, 1972," in *Bauten der Olympischen Spiele*, 1. Richter took photographs of the transformation of the terrain and collected them in his *Atlas;* see ill. 134.

76. Kandzia, Letter to the author, 22 March 2006. A contemporary critic goes further, claiming, "The architects did not want any works of art within the scope of the Olympic Park. They held that the architectural and landscape-encompassing design of the sports centre itself should be considered a large-scale work of plastic art. That is why no sculptures or mural paintings were included" (Wimmer, *Olympic Buildings*, 57).

77. Reproduced in Harbeke, *Bauten für Olympia '72*, 99.

78. Richter recently corrected the account given by Elger, who claimed that he never took the collaborative projects seriously and was glad they were never realized; Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 231. When I asked Richter why he had not taken the projects seriously, his assistant reported his answer, that "the task he took very seriously indeed, but he realized in the course of the negotiations that it was not taken very seriously by those who commissioned it." By contrast, "he soon realized that his idea for a design of African landscape panoramas . . . could not be realized and was not thought through properly, so that he was happy that this idea was not discussed further." Ell, Letter to the author, 22 May 2007. By contrast, Richter's paintings *Rot, Gelb, Blau* (Red, Yellow, Blue; 1973) (*Werkübersicht* 345-1 through 345-3), commissioned for the lobby of the BMW Headquarters building designed by Karl Schwanzer in 1973 and located next to the Olympic grounds, were installed soon after the building was completed. Based on Richter's *Atlas* studies of the Olympic grounds, Helmut Friedel has argued for a relation between this context and the BMW paintings in Friedel, "Transformations, Camouflage and Land Art."

79. The exhibition in Bremerhaven was entitled *Fenster I* and was followed by *Fenster II*, based on the same idea, at Kunstforum in Munich in February 1971.

80. I have not been able to determine whether this documentation panel still exists. The *Werkverzeichnis* reproduces a different drawing for the ceiling circumscription, *Wvz* 586. It also lists but does not reproduce another one, *Wvz* 539, probably the image discussed and reproduced here. This photograph is in the Palermo Archive. Richter confirmed that this exhibition was carefully conceived as a collaboration: "I would have not hung the *Ausschnitte* like that by myself" (Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007).

81. Richter, Letter to Birgit Pelzer, 25 March 1980, quoted in Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 229.

82. Richter quoted in Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 229–30. For the death announcement passage, see Grüterich, "Gerhard Richters Phänomenologie der Illusion," 80.

83. The version reproduced in figure 151 is very brittle and damaged, as is to be expected, given the material. Richter recalled that the card was designed with the assistance of Anton Konerding in conversation with the author, 16 November 2007.

84. Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 229. Thordis Moeller recalls that Palermo and Heiner Friedrich once saw Dalí at the Regency Bar in New York and "thought he was funny" (Moeller, Conversation with the author, 16 May 2006).

85. Palermo's skepticism about utopian conceptions of art probably extended to conceptual art and institutional critique. For more on Palermo's attitude toward decoration, see Chapter 3.

86. Aspects of this model of meaning are related to Walter Benjamin's conception of allegory and Theodor W. Adorno's "negative dialectic"; see Benjamin, "Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels" (1925), in *Walter Benjamin Abhandlungen: Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 1.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991); Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966).

87. See Chapter 4; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 231.

88. *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 134, translation slightly modified based on the original German in *Richter. Text*, 125.

89. Richter in Marcovicz, "*To the People . . .*," 76. By contrast, shortly after their return Konrad Fischer remarked in an interview that "Palermo and Richter . . . have now been to New York, and they felt at home there because they had already met artists like Andre and LeWitt over here" ("K.F. Interviewed by Georg Jappe," *Studio International* 181 [February 1971]: 70).

90. Six Friedrich as told to Susanne Küper in Küper, "Palermo," 482. Richter said that he considered this "entirely possible" in conversation with the author, 16 November 2007. The size of the angle is estimated based on measurements of the paintings. Küper identified Richter's *Kissenbild* (1970) as an alternative for the upper painting; see Küper, "Palermo," 483. However, the original photograph in the Palermo Archive unmistakably shows *Vorhang*; see *Werkübersicht* 36a. Moeller notes in her commentary in the *Werkverzeichnis* that the bottom line was written on top of something erased, *Wvz* 596. The documentation reproduced here from the Palermo Archive still bears what was probably the original, incorrect inscription on the official documentation. Palermo corrected the location (not Heiner but Six Friedrich's apartment, not Cologne but Munich) and the date (not 1970 but 1971), but he notably kept the collaborative attribution—changed merely from "mit Richter" to "mit Gerd Richter."

91. Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 98.

92. Ibid., 142.

93. See Chapter 3.

94. Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 50. Perhaps Richter was so surprised and impressed by Palermo's wall painting not despite but because he had been trained as a socialist realist wall painter. He had chosen the medium for his training in East Germany because it provided him with greater artistic freedom and required a less detailed rendering; Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007.

There are some inconsistencies about precisely which installation gave Richter the idea to add sculptures. Richter seems to describe here the Cologne version with all of its walls painted. Harten reports that Richter "had the idea in 1971 at Heiner Friedrich's Cologne gallery, when Palermo changed his previously executed positive-negative conception" (*Gerhard Richter. Bilder*, essay by Harten, 50). If correct, these two accounts suggest that Palermo had independently painted the Cologne version and that Richter added the sculptures at the last minute. This seems unlikely for practical reasons. Elger reports that Richter saw the Munich painting at the opening and had the idea for the sculptures then; Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 232. Buchloh reports that the exhibition came about as an invitation by Friedrich; see Buchloh, "Geteiltes Gedächtnis," 31. It seems most likely that they planned the exhibition together on the basis of Palermo's Munich exhibition and that Palermo changed his contribution because of the change in location and the addition of the sculptures.

95. The work has consistently been referred to by incorrect titles. The title listed on the exhibition invitation is *Wandmalerei und Skulptur* (exhibition invitation, collection of the author). *Zwei Skulpturen für einen Raum von Palermo* is the title Richter gave to his sculptures only; see *Werkübersicht* 297-1.

96. Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 78. He continued, "After the exhibition, back then, I took the sculpture home. And later I had them cast in bronze. Three pairs exist. One pair of plaster, two of bronze." For more details on the different versions of the busts, see Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 232ff. The photographs Richter and Palermo took of each other are collected in Richter's *Atlas*, ills. 42, 43. The invitation to the Munich exhibition, in the Palermo Archive, included colored drawings of the positive and negative walls in an ocher that must have been fairly close to the original color. The invitation to the collaborative exhibition only included a black and white photograph.

97. Buchloh, "Geteiltes Gedächtnis," 31–34. Compare Storr, *Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, 59ff.

98. See Richter's description of the making of the busts in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 78, where he stressed, "I never learned all that. Casting specialists are everywhere. Back then I made it in clay; the modeling was kind of fun. I was never in a sculpture class." My reading of this collaboration in terms of both a celebration of painting and a comment on its crisis differs from Hubertus Butin's reading of the same work as a celebration of painting only; see Butin, "Gerhard Richter und die Reflexion der Bilder," 50.

99. Richter in Elger, *Gerhard Richter. Maler*, 236.

100. Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 78.

101. The connection to Romantic friendship portraits was first made by Laszlo Glozer in his review of the exhibition; see Glozer, "Freundschaftsbildnisse." On the Romantic friendship portrait, see Klaus Lankheit, *Das Freundschaftsbild der Romantik* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1952), esp. 89ff.; Richard von Dülmen, "Freundschaftskult und Kultivierung der Individualität um 1800," in *Entdeckung des Ich. Die Geschichte der Individualisierung vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Richard von Dülmen (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001).

102. For Palermo's interest in Malevich, see his *Komposition mit 8 Rechtecken, Wvz* 16; Schwenk, "Studien zur Person," 26–27, 160, and Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 39. For his interest in Ryman, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 21. On the end of painting, see Yve-Alain Bois, "Painting: The Task of Mourning," in Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 229–44.

103. Richter has made conflicting statements about the role of light in his art. In his 1964–65 notes he stated, "The central problem in my painting is light" (*Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 39). In a more recent interview with Robert Storr, however, he said, "I was never interested in light. Light is there and you turn it on or you turn it off" (Storr, *Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, 292).

104. Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 77.

105. See Kerber, untitled exhibition review of Palermo and Richter at Galerie Friedrich, 144.

106. Richter's contribution was a process-color letterpress reproduction in cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. Richter used letterpress on two other occasions: for the artist book collaboration with Polke in 1966 mentioned above and for an editioned catalogue for an exhibition at the

Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach in 1974. See *Gerhard Richter Editionen*, ills. 3, 54. Since both works were books, the choice of the medium seems less significant than for *Telefon*. In 1970 letterpress was a technique with a long history and tradition and was still the most common means of reproducing images in books and magazines. Offset printing started to become standard only several years later. I would like to thank Chip Benson for sharing his knowledge about the use of the letterpress in the twentieth century and around 1970 specifically. Stefan Gronert kindly drew my attention to Richter's use of letterpress before and after *Telefon*. The print is an edition of fifty. See *Palermo. Die Gesamte Grafik und alle Auflagenobjekte*, 65; *Gerhard Richter Editionen*, ill. 42. In a 16 November 2007 conversation with me Richter could not remember whether the print was made before or after the related diptych, but considering the planning that goes into a collaborative print made with two different techniques, I believe it is fair to assume that it came after the painting.

107. For Palermo's move, see Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 20; Küper, "Palermo," 388.

108. On Palermo's crisis, see Chapter 4, note 32, above.

109. Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 74.

110. These statements have sometimes been misunderstood as nihilistic, but I read them positively. The quotations appeared within five pages of each other in the back of Rolf-Gunter Dienst, *Deutsche Kunst. Eine Neue Generation* (Cologne: DuMont, 1970), first published in his essay "Deutsche Kunst: Eine Neue Generation," *Das Kunstwerk* 21 (June–July 1968). This was the first appearance of each statement in print. For Richter's quote and its dating to 1966, see *Richter: Daily Practice of Painting*, 58, translation slightly modified based on the original German in *Richter, Text*, 53. Palermo's quotation also appeared in *Palermo. Bilder und Objekte*. Ludwig Rinn and Gerhard Storck have disputed the authenticity of Palermo's statement in *Palermo. Zeichnungen, 1963–1973*, 120–22, and Storck, *Die Stoffbilder von Palermo*, 8–9: Rinn claims Palermo denied these were his words, while Storck believes they were Dienst's own words. See also Grosser, *Palermo*, 78–80; Lange, *Dickicht des Materials*, 9–10.

111. See the discussion in Chapter 4 of the three monochrome paintings dating from 1972–73, *Wvz* 167–9, which are crucial in this development.

112. Michael Fried in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture I*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 79. See also James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 119ff.

113. Other important serial precedents are Palermo's 1972 untitled white staffs, *Wvz* 154, an untitled three-part painting from 1973, *Wvz* 160, and the three monochromes mentioned above, *Wvz* 167–69.

114. Gottschaller, *Palermo*, 25.

115. Richter in Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Eight Gray*," 19n7; Richter, Conversation with the author, 16 November 2007; and Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 73.

116. As Richter explained, Palermo "took over my studio in Harkortstrasse, because I got another one" (Richter in Marcovicz, *"To the People . . . ,"* 72).

117. Richter's *Schwarz Rot Gold* (Black, Red, Gold, 1998) installed inside the entryway of the Berlin Reichstag Building, dedicated to the German people, clearly continues his dialogue with Palermo into the present. The use of colored glass and the national colors are related both to Palermo's *Himmelsrichtungen* and *to the people of N.Y.C.* On Richter's work, see Uwe Fleckner, "Gerhard Richter: Schwarz Rot Gold, 1998," in *Kunst in der Stadt. Skulpturen in Berlin, 1980–2000*, ed. Hans Dickel and Uwe Fleckner (Berlin: Nicolai, 2003).

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